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**Sara Harris**  
author of *Skid Row U.S.A.*

# Hellhole

The scandalous story  
of life inside a women's prison  
in a large American city

# UNFORTUNATE WOMEN

Who are the unfortunate women interned in New York City's House of Detention for Women? How did they get there, and what is life like behind its bars? Sara Harris, one of America's most brilliant journalists, takes you into the lives of the dope addicts, prostitutes, skid rowers, and high-class call girls who are confined in the House. In the inmates' own vivid words, we learn of the evils of prison life—overcrowding, filth, lesbianism, and inadequate and sadistic medical care—and how society drives them to repeated imprisonment. It is a spellbinding story. You will never be exactly the same after reading it.

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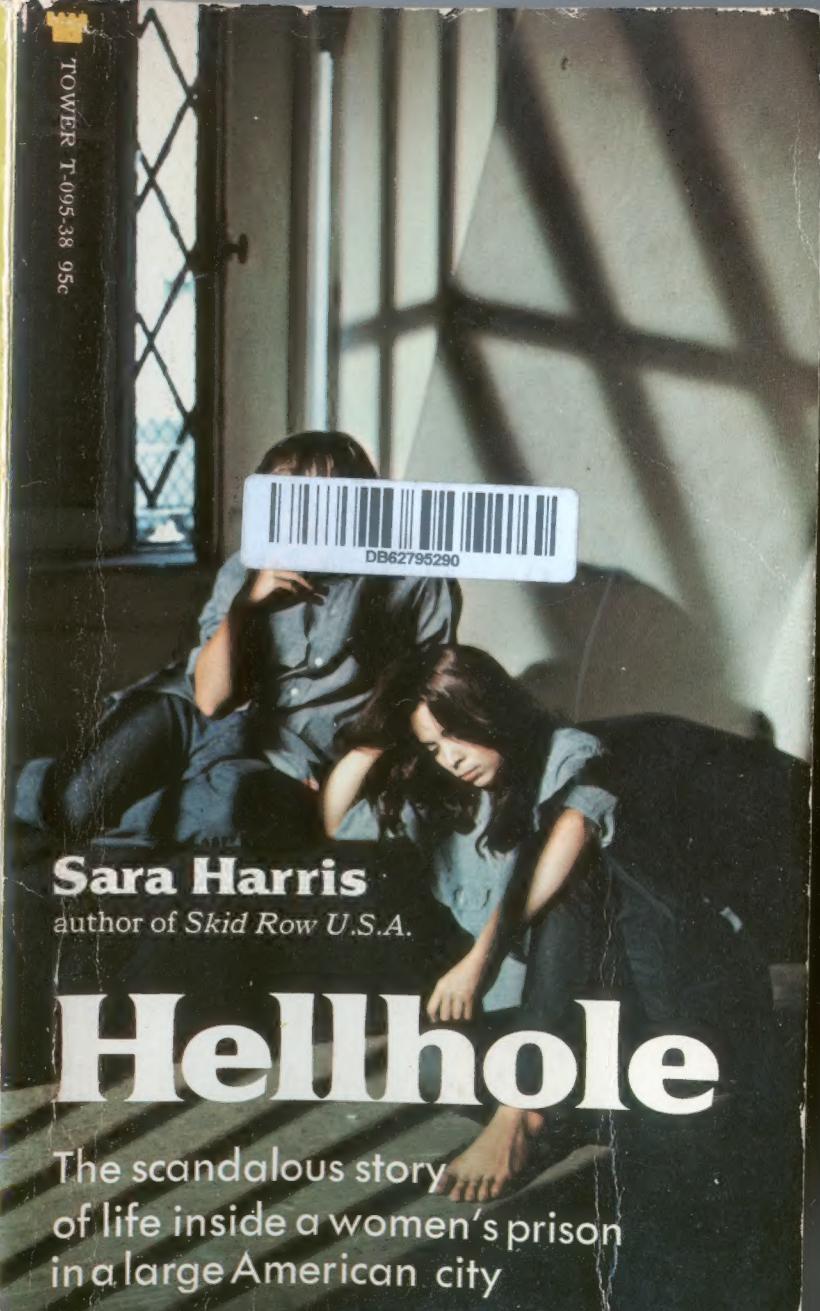
## Hellhole

Sara Harris

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## **Inmates of the Women's House of Detention**

**Joyce Kranjewski**—20-year-old prostitute and addict—sentenced five times.

**Knocky Nelson**—a former officer of the House who fell in love with an inmate and forged checks to get money for her.

**Rusty Bricker**—lesbian psychopath—has served nine sentences at age 27.

**Louise Johnson**—call girl who landed in Hell-hole when her pimp forgot to pay off the cops.

**Bertha Green**—age 46—Bertha's daughter **Cora May**—age 31—and Bertha's 16-year-old granddaughter **Cindy**—among them have been in the Women's House of Detention a total of 44 times.

What is their story—what does life and prison do to them?

# **HELLHOLE**

**The Shocking Story of the  
Inmates and Life  
in the  
New York City  
House of Detention for Women**

**by Sara Harris**

**Originally published  
in hard cover by  
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**A TOWER BOOK**

## HELLHOLE

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*The Village Voice* for letter to the editor by Andrea Dworkin in the April 25, 1965, issue. Reprinted by permission from *The Village Voice*.

## *To Arnold*

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### *Introduction*

This book is a portrayal of the inmates and life inside what may be one of the most infamous women's prisons in the country, the New York City House of Detention for Women. Located on 6th Avenue and 10th Street, in the very center of Greenwich Village, it is, nevertheless, an unknown world to the rest of us, as distinct and separate a place as though its location were Mars instead of New York.

My acquaintance with the House of Detention for Women began ten years ago when, in order to research a book on prostitution in New York, *Cast the First Stone*, on which I collaborated with John M. Murtagh, Chief Judge of the New York City Criminal Courts, I served for a time there as a social worker. Perhaps my reactions to the prison can best be expressed in a letter I wrote to my father

in California from which the following is an excerpt:

... I once thought that, if I worked in this prison long enough, I might grow accustomed to what goes on here. But, now, I don't think I ever will. I think now that, no matter how long I remain here, I'll still see something every day that'll make me want to cry. This place is a snake-pit. It's teaching me new lessons I never would have believed, if I weren't seeing them with my own eyes, about the vast extent of man's inhumanity, not so much to other men who have erred, as to women who have.

Snakepit conditions, as I lived through them during four months in the House of Detention, have changed little, if at all, in ten years. I know it because I spent many months, from May of 1965 to April of 1966, researching the House of Detention as it is today, reading through annual reports and other records, talking not alone with custodial and professional staff of the prison, but also with people who'd investigated it themselves out of their concern for the moral and social welfare of the whole community: a United States Commissioner who labeled it a "house of ill-repute" and called the Department of Correction that administered it a "City Department of Corruption"; a New York State Assemblyman who called it "a blight, a reflection on our civilization" and said that, when he'd toured through it, he was "horified at what I saw there. It made me physically ill"; a former State Commissioner for Special Investigations who called it a "hell-hole and a present day

snakepit"; many lawyers, at least five of whom said it was "a complete negation of our constitution"; a judge who called it "a chapter in the history of New York... and one of the ugliest."

And Dorothy Day, executive head of the Catholic Worker movement, recognized as among the most socially conscious lay religious movements of our time. Miss Day, imprisoned some time ago for having taken part in a civil rights demonstration, says from her personal experience as an inmate: "There aren't sufficiently strong words in our language to describe my true feelings about that place. Will it suffice to say then that, far from being rehabilitative, it would seem calculated to turn women already embittered against society so rancorous we'd have no right to blame them for whatever action they might take in revenge."

Mostly, though, I spoke with former inmates and staff of the prison. This book could not have been written without the cooperation of such people as Helena Lewis, Benita Cannon, and Barbara Pliskow, peace and civil rights demonstrators. It could not have been written either without the help of prison officials and volunteer staff.

Carol Janeway, volunteer ceramic teacher at the prison, who out of her personal concern, helped many inmates get jobs and scholarships, wrote a series of articles for the local weekly newspaper, *The Villager*, from which I have quoted.

And, especially, it could not have been written without the active participation of former inmates who are not peace or civil rights demonstrators, in the prison for "crimes of conscience," but rather abortionists, armed robbers, petty thieves, alcoholics, prostitutes, narcotics addicts who'd been in

and out of the House of Detention more times than they cared to remember, and women who were held in jail for weeks and sometimes months merely because they were too poor to buy the bail bonds placed on them. I met with them in my home and their "pads," in rooms in hotels that should have been raided premises according to city statute, in notorious and off-the-beaten-track "lesbian bars" in Greenwich Village, "prostitutes' bars" from 40th to 60th Streets on the West Side, "junkies' bars" in the 70's around Broadway, and in a public bathroom in a morbid, disgustingly dirty hotel that homeless addicts use as a "shooting gallery" for administering their narcotics.

This book could never have been written without them. Their names must be kept anonymous for their own sakes, for they literally dedicated themselves to helping me with its preparation. I can only wish for them, in return for what they did for me, that their stories, raked up through harrowing hours of reliving experiences they would have preferred to bury and let lie, will stir the blood of my readers as they stirred mine.

SARA HARRIS

## HELLHOLE

# 1

## The Misery, the Tears, the Despair....

This book begins, logically, on February 20, 1965, when two eighteen-year-old girls, Andrea Dworkin, a Bennington College freshman, and Lisa Goldrosen, a student at Bard College, were dispatched to the New York City House of Detention for Women following their arrest in a peace demonstration at the United States Mission of the United Nations.

It also begins on Monday, March 8, 1965, when, in his crusading *New York Post* column, "Who Sinned?" James A. Wechsler characterized Andrea as "visibly still shaken by what had occurred. But she told her story simply and without theatrics in affidavit form." These are excerpts from Andrea Dworkin's sworn words to James Wechsler:

" . . . We arrived at the Women's House at about 2 a.m. (Feb. 20). Our possessions were impounded. . . . We were taken to a room in back of the reception room and showered and searched. We were then given vaginal searches. This was done by a nurse. We were then taken up to our cells and locked in. . . .

"During the afternoon we were taken down to the first floor to be examined. We asked several policewomen what the examination was and we were told 'nothing' . . . In the examination room they took our temperature rectally, asked us whether we were virgins and told us to sit down and wait . . . In the meantime two men entered. One of them was explaining to the other the procedure that was going to be involved and explained that they were examining us for venereal disease. I was taken into the (examining) room first. The examining doctor was sitting down and the other doctor was standing there. I was made to get on the examining table and spread my legs. While he began exerting pressure on my stomach and my breast, I told him he was hurting me.

"But he continued to exert the pressure. The examination consisted of his inserting his hand in both the rectum and the vagina. He used a rubber glove. Then the use of forceps was brutally applied to the vagina.

"During this examination the observing doctor asked me whether I went to school and where. I told him that I went to Bennington, and he said he used to go to Bennington to find girls. He asked me how many girls at Bennington were virgins, and I said I did not know. He told me

I ought to know more about that than Vietnam. The conversation continued this way as the forceps were being applied. . . .

"Inside of the cell blocks, homosexuality was increasingly aggressive. Girls were constantly making love with each other in front of the policewomen. I was in a situation where girls were constantly touching me and caressing me and sticking their hands between my legs. Lisa woke up one morning with two girls holding her down and a third climbing on top of her.

"Lisa, Rachele and I were separated from each other. I was in an adolescent cell block and Lisa in an adult cell block. . . . We were not permitted to send any messages or contact our lawyer. The policewoman on the floor told me it was impossible because it was the weekend and Monday was George Washington's birthday.

"It was not until we were taken down to talk with the captain that we were permitted to make a call. This was Monday. . . .

"There were mice in the cells and the police-women, when the lights were out and everyone was locked in, would stand in the halls and say, 'The mice are going to have a good time tonight, girls. . . .'

Mr. Wechsler also quoted sworn statements from Lisa Goldrosen and another demonstrator, Rachele Esrick, who had been arrested along with Lisa and Andrea. And it wasn't long after his column appeared that "the notorious local Bastille," as he described the House of Detention, was, for yet another time in its nefarious history, under fire. Out-

raged citizens demanded immediate investigation and both the city and state responded by the organization of "exploratory investigative committees" including:

Assemblyman Joseph Kottler's Committee on Penal Institutions in New York State;

Governor Nelson D. Rockefeller's Committee to Investigate the New York City House of Detention for Women, headed by Special Investigator Herman D. Stichman;

The New York State Commission of Correction Committee to Investigate the New York City House of Detention for Women, headed by State Correction Commissioner Paul D. McGinnis;

The Mayor's Committee to investigate the New York City House of Detention for Women, headed by Deputy Mayor Edward F. Cavanagh, Jr.;

And finally and most important, the Fourth May (1965) Grand Jury to Investigate the House of Detention for Women, which promised to do its objective best to sift fact from fiction in the allegations of Andrea Dworkin and other former inmates.

The investigations continued for months, and, in the meantime, city authorities defended the institution vigorously. As was to be expected, the most fervent champion of the House was its warden, Mrs. Mary Lindsay. On April 15, she wrote a letter to *The Village Voice* whose contents are apparent from Andrea's indignant answer written the next week.

Village Voice, April 22, 1965

ANSWERING MRS. LINDSAY

Dear Sir:

To Mary Lindsay, Superintendent of the Women's House of Horrors:

I am sitting in my room in Bennington watching the first spring birds imprint their shadows in the snow which still covers the mountains, reading again and again in disbelief and rage your statements reported by Marlene Nadle (VV, April 15)

To deal with your statements point blank:

1. "The girl no longer even says that she was not allowed a lawyer or to send a message out now that she knows we can prove that she did both."

Mrs. Lindsay, that statement is not a statement which was ever made, not to James Wechsler, not to Herman Stichman. The charges which were made and which still stand, are these: I asked a policewoman on the sixth floor, where I was being held, when, where, how I could speak to my lawyer. I was told that I could not speak to him until the Tuesday after George Washington's birthday, the day on which I was going to court. I had been advised by my lawyer that I could demand to see him and to speak with him and that prison officials must so notify him. After being told that I could not see my lawyer, I demanded a telephone slip so that I could contact him. I was told by this same policewoman that telephone messages were not made by prison officials on weekends or national holidays, i.e., George Washington's birthday. I subsequently repeated my requests/demands and was consistently denied the means by which I could contact my lawyer. Rachele Esrick and Lisa Goldro-

sen, also demonstrators, made similar demands, and these were similarly denied.

On Monday, February 22, late morning, Rachele, Lisa and I were called down to talk to an official about our hunger strikes. We demanded again that we be allowed to contact our lawyer. The officials expressed disbelief that we had not been able to send messages and immediately provided message slips. We had been arrested February 19; we were given the slips on February 22, the messages were not delivered until after visiting hours, and we were therefore unable to see our lawyer until we appeared at our hearing on the 23rd.

Rachele, Lisa, and I have made these statements in sworn testimony, the charges still stand, and there is no doubt that we were denied by the policewomen on the sixth floor, either through judgments on their parts or irresponsibility, the right to contact a lawyer, and to send messages for an unreasonable amount of time.

2. "The three girls were well treated. The staff rallied around them when they said they were going on a hunger strike. Everyone tried to get them to eat something to keep up their strength. There are notes saying, 'I got Rachele to eat some ice cream,' 'They ate a little soup.' The Assistant Superintendent spent 45 minutes with them just discussing the hunger strike on an ideological basis."

I suppose that "well treated" implies an immense value judgment. . . . With respect to "everyone's" concern for our strength, welfare, etc: indeed, officials did try to make us eat. We

were told that if we did not eat, we would be taken for psychiatric examination, which would postpone the date of our hearing and result in longer prison stays not only for the three women demonstrators, but for the five men demonstrators, who would not post bail. I could not distinguish between being "rallied round" and being intimidated. From inside the jail they had the same smell.

If, indeed, there were notes saying "I got Rachele to eat some ice cream" and "They ate a little soup," then those notes were far removed from the reality which I was living. I took some tea when I felt weak, after our first day Lisa took only water (she had had a cup of tea previously, I think). From February 19 (our arrest took place around 5:15 p.m.) until our release on February 23 (around 5 p.m.), none of the women demonstrators had anything more than tea. There was no intake of ice cream or soup.

The talk which we had with the Assistant Superintendent consisted of explaining our hunger strike, a brief discussion (not ideological, in fact pragmatic) and then the previously described discussion about lawyers and messages.

The treatment, the conditions to which we and all other women prisoners were subject, were abominable.

3. Mrs. Lindsay said she did not think the behavior of the young physician was improper. She said questions about the prisoner's virginity are necessary because a different kind of examination is given to those who are virgins. She also said the physician's conversation about Bennington was an attempt to relax the girl and to treat

her as a person who shared a similar background.

Mrs. Lindsay, I do not know what would indicate to you an improper internal examination. I do know that I was severely hurt, that I bled for several days after my release due to a vaginal infection which my doctor, because of the timing, attributes to the examination or some contamination immediately thereafter. I do know that upon examination after release, I was told that I had been "severely traumatized," i.e., bruised. I do know that no internal examination is conducted with such gross disrespect for the human body and for human dignity and with such obvious pleasure in the embarrassment and pain of the patient victim. I do know that the doctor's conversation with me was not "an attempt to relax" me, it was an attempt to humiliate and frighten me, and I do know that it was overheard by Rachele Esrick and Lisa Goldrosen and that they had similar experiences.

I also know that, because of the bruises and infection which I contracted, I have been internally examined twice since that time and that those examinations were conducted in the way which the first one should have been. I know that there is doubt among physicians as to the necessity of examining those who have not been brought in for prostitution for venereal disease, and I know that regardless as to the necessity of the examination, there is no need for brutality or humiliation.

And I also know that these statements have been made under oath, taken at pain from an ugly personal experience, and that they will

stand because, Mrs. Lindsay, they express simply and accurately what happened.

The conditions and treatment which Rachele, Lisa, and I have described to the press came as no shock either to them or to the people of New York. Articles have been written previously by people like Dorothy Day and Barbara Deming, affidavits have been signed by many civil rights and peace demonstrators, testimony has been given by inmates and former inmates, and no denial, no rationale, no misstatement is going to for one moment lessen the horror of what the Women's House of Detention is. Keeping the press from observing the rats crawling around in the cells will not lessen the rat terror for those inside; pretending that charges which have been made for decades against the Women's House of Detention are not true will not erase the nausea of those who know (and more and more people, Mrs. Lindsay, do know) what that prison is, and what it does to the people who are in it, and what it does to the people who pay for it, who support it by their silence, who try to forget it, to pretend that it does exist.

It does exist, Mrs. Lindsay, and it exists as I and many others have described it, but it need not continue to destroy the human lives which it touches (and in that I include the policewomen who work there). Alternatives have been offered —offered to a city which chooses not to listen or to act.

But do not think for a minute, Mrs. Lindsay, that you can make a statement concerning Lisa, Rachele, or myself to which we will not respond. We were not intimidated by our incarceration,

we were awoken by it—and no outside source can impose limitations on consciousness. It seeks its own expression.

Andrea Dworkin

Bennington College

Bennington, Vermont

In the course of my own examination of the prison, I went, one Saturday in August of 1965, to 1440 Broadway where Assemblyman Joseph Kottler, Chairman of the New York State Committee on Penal Institutions to Investigate the Charges Against the New York City House of Detention, has his New York City law office and where he was spending his weekends away from Albany, taking sworn testimony from former inmates. He's a solidly built, balding, bright-eyed man in his forties, not at all the movie type of prison reformer. We talked for a while about his findings about the prison and then he told me he was going to take testimony from some former inmates and invited me to join him and Benita Cannon, Barbara Pliskow and Helena Lewis, who had spent five days in the House of Detention in October of 1963 following conviction of charges of disorderly conduct for taking part in a civil rights demonstration against discrimination in the building of a housing project on the Lower East Side of New York.

These civil rights demonstrators obviously were not the misbent trees, the fouled-up women, the psychopathic liars some city officials had charac-

terized any former inmates who would testify against the House of Detention. They're attractive, well-adjusted, idealistic and soundly motivated young women with secure lives and worthwhile professional attainments. Helena Lewis, within a few credits of obtaining her doctor of philosophy degree in history at New York University, worked at the time as assistant to the dean of University College of New York University. Barbara Pliskow is a psychologist working primarily with adolescents and also studying for her doctor of philosophy degree. Benita Cannon, daughter of a Pittsburgh lawyer, is a highly experienced law secretary. All three of them, in their separate ways, were as outraged by their experiences in the prison as the eighteen-year-old Andrea. Benita Cannon, for instance, at the conclusion of her testimony, when Assemblyman Kottler asked her: "You were only there for five days, Mrs. Cannon, but let me ask you how it would be if you'd been under sentence there for a year," answered, without hesitation, "I would have killed myself. I would have killed myself." Assemblyman Kottler asked her, "Do you mean that?" And she answered, "Yes, I mean that. Yes, I do." Her complete sincerity was manifest in every word she said.

And Helena Lewis, when asked whether she believed that a girl who came into the prison without a drug habit would know where to obtain drugs when she came out, answers that of course she would. And when Assemblyman Kottler asks her if a girl in prison on another offense, shoplifting, for instance, would learn the methods of prostitutes there, she says, "Oh, I'm sure she would, yes. Oh, yes, yes, this I'm sure of."

She characterizes the jail as a "hellhole, an abomination."

Assemblyman Kottler, thanking the women for their testimony, says he believes that the recording of their experiences can go a long way toward forcing people to recognize the legitimacy of the strident cries of the habitué inmates which have, for so long, gone unheard.

Because Helena Lewis and Benita Cannon agreed with what Assemblyman Kottler said and because their interest like his and mine is in answering the cries for help most long-term prisoners are too cowed and beaten ever to have made for themselves, they agreed to tell this story of their five-day incarceration in its entirety. After all, their lives, for five days anyhow, brushed against the prison repeaters' ill-starred lives. The meaningful moments of the House of Detention habitués who served their long terms were also meaningful for them despite the brevity of the time they spent there. And it would be foolish to deny they've got the gift for talking about meaningful moments many House of Detention inmates don't. They agree, therefore, just to tell the story of their time in the prison since their arrest and incarceration. . . . Tell the story exactly as it happened to them.

Helena's and Benita's story begins in August of 1963 when they and several other members of the Congress of Racial Equality were picketing the "discriminatory Building Trades Union" which, Helena states, "was involved in the building of the city-sponsored Rutgers Houses on the Lower East Side. We were sitting in the roadway in order to prevent the cement trucks from passing through,

and singing freedom songs like 'We Shall Overcome' and chanting 'Jim Crow Must Go.' There were many policemen gathered, along with hundreds of the neighbors who seemed to be in sympathy with us, and, I must say, the police were polite in their approach to us."

"They must have asked us three times to move on," Benita said, "before they finally said we were under arrest, charged with disorderly conduct." She smiled. "One of them, a lieutenant I think it was, asked us if we'd walk to the wagon or if we wanted to be carried. We had been instructed, of course, to walk, since failing to cooperate would have constituted resistance to arrest."

Benita, Helena and their nine codefendants were tried for three days in an imposing, mahogany-walled, many-windowed Magistrates' Courtroom at 100 Centre Street during which their clearest recollection is young Assistant District Attorney Kuh attempting to portray them as public enemies of such magnitude that they ought not to be permitted out on bail while their trials were in process.

"At least, Your Honor, have them fingerprinted now," Attorney Kuh urged seriously. "For the public good."

His Honor neither denied the defendants bail nor had them fingerprinted but did, after their three-day trial, find them guilty of disorderly conduct and sentenced them either to pay a twenty-five-dollar fine or serve five days in jail. Helena, Benita, Barbara and two men chose to serve the five days.

Benita, Barbara and Helena, although they'd been sentenced early in the morning, were held, "awaiting transportation," for a full day at 100

Centre Street. Subsequently, they were taken to a cell where the three of them were alone, but they also spent many harrowing hours in a cell with a number of other women who had been convicted of various offenses. Most of them were Black or Puerto Rican and quite young, although a few were older. The majority looked shabby. A couple of the younger inmates were crying. Most were just looking out of the cell bars and not paying any attention to anyone.

"You could, of course, recognize the dry addicts among them," Benita says, "and there were many. It was terrifying and pitiful because some of them were already beginning their withdrawal and nobody seemed to care; nobody seemed even to realize they were in agony."

"One little girl," Helena says, "came up to me and literally begged me for something sweet in the hope that, if she had it, she might be enabled to stave off her withdrawal for a little while. I had some Life Savers—sounds like a pun, doesn't it?—which I gave her. But I never found out whether they helped her or not because, by that time, they'd moved the three of us into another cell."

Helena, Benita and Barbara, like Andrea, were fingerprinted, questioned, had their purses impounded and the contents taken away from them.

"May I have my hairbrush and comb?" Helena asked.

"No."

"My lipstick?"

"No."

"I have some pills in my purse that I am taking on doctor's orders. May I have them?"

"No."

"May I have my glasses?"

"No."

"But I've got to wear my glasses constantly. I'm blind as a bat without them. How'll I see anything?"

Finally, after much pleading on Helena's part, the officer returned her glasses to her.

Helena, Barbara and Benita went back to their benches after their handbags had been impounded and waited until another officer ordered them into a room where there were showers. "She told us to remove our clothing, all of it. And she took the clothing from us and tied it into a bundle, and, as we stood there unclothed, she ordered us into the shower."

"Did they give you any kind of a robe?" I asked Benita.

"No," she said, "no robe."

"And were you all together in each other's presence or was there any privacy?"

"No privacy," she said. "And then, after our showers, we were ordered to squat, and a trusty, another prisoner, examined us rectally—looking for narcotics, I presume. And after that we were given cotten smocks to wear with nothing underneath—and we were given those smocks, some sort of garment. Mine came, I guess, about two-thirds of the way up my thigh. Helena's came down to her ankle. I don't remember where Barbara's came any more. And, in these garments, we were ordered into a further adjoining room where a medical examination was to be conducted. There was a woman doctor who asked us a few questions about our medical history and then subjected us to a vaginal examination."

"Did anyone advise you that you were going to have such an examination," I asked.

"No one," she said, "I had no intimation." Benita kept asking what would happen, and received no answer. "The doctor wouldn't speak to me at all. She was very brusque, very uncommunicative. She made it quite clear that this was the standard procedure. Period."

"Did you object?" I asked. "In so many words?"

"I made a comment to her to the effect that we had not been arrested for prostitution, which might have justified this in a health sense, or for a narcotics charge, which might have justified it in that sense; that we were civil rights defendants, and it seemed to me that this was an improper sort of procedure in our case."

"What did she say?"

"She looked at me as though she couldn't have cared less about what I was saying and just said, 'Get up on that table and spread your legs apart.'"

Helena added, "The vaginal examination was really brutal. I know I was hurt by the brusque way the doctor thrust the instrument in me—I mean, literally physically hurt. And, as for the young kids—God, I'll never forget one little girl who couldn't have been over eighteen and might, in fact, have been less. She screamed quite loud and kept protesting that she was a virgin. And from her reaction, she quite likely was. She was absolutely panicky. Nobody made an attempt to comfort her or to explain the nature of the examination or to treat her with any gentleness. The reaction was laughter from the surrounding prisoners, from the guards who were present and even or especially from the doctor."

After their medical examination, Barbara, Helena and Benita, still with no clothes beyond their skimpy robes, were assigned to their cell blocks on a floor for sentenced women. "And, you know," Helena says, "no matter how much you hear or read about the sordidness, the morbidity, the horror—no matter how often you tell yourself, this institution is a maximum security jail—you still don't believe that New York, in this day, could confine women who certainly aren't, no matter how harshly you want to judge them, menaces, to such a place. The cells, each five by eight, were meant for one person, but many contained two inmates. I don't think one person could have moved around comfortably and with two of us—two cots literally jammed up against one another—either my roommate or I had to stand on a cot when the other one had to pass. We took turns getting in or out of the cell. Also, one of us had to stand on our cot when the other wanted to get to the toilet or the washbasin in the cell.

"It's hard, even now, to describe the condition of the cots and the mattresses. The mattresses were so dirty you could smell the filth. The dirt wasn't only on the outside where you could see it; it flew out and made you sneeze whenever you lay down or moved around at night. All the mattresses were lumpy too.

"There wasn't any sheet on my bed and I wasn't given a pillow. All I had to cover myself with was some kind of a cotton blanket affair and that was so filthy I didn't want to use it. It smelled from all the girls who'd had it before me. It was blood-stained.

"And there were rats in the cellblock and

cockroaches in the cellblock. You could see the roaches in your own cell around the plumbing, the sink and the toilet. In fact, we saw cockroaches the first day we came in. And we saw our first rat on our first night in the dining hall. It just came prancing along the floor. And, believe me, it wasn't an imaginary rat. It was real, the one I saw.

"In the prison, everyone was accustomed to the sight of the rats, and, every once in a while, you'd hear somebody let out a shriek. And, someone else would say, 'A rat just went by.'"

"And you know," Helena said, "after you received the clothes they issued you, you felt like you belonged in such an atmosphere and no other. The underwear did not fit and, really, that is very humiliating to a woman. And it isn't clean; it's dirty. The brassieres were issued without regard to size and certainly that can be distressing to a woman, can tear down her self-image almost more than anything else.

"The other articles of clothing—the shoes are oxfords, which not only do not fit, but are also extremely unattractive, and the socks, ribbed cotton such as schoolchildren wear. The outer garments are cotton shifts which are either too short or too long.

"The prison is quite cold, and you're issued a sweater you wouldn't wear if you didn't have to, generally without buttons. I can't recall seeing any sweaters with buttons. Also, most of the sweaters are old and raveled.

"At the end of five days, I looked terrible and disliked the sight of myself."

Nighttime in the House of Detention.

Gates—gates, rattling someplace in Benita's and Helena's cell corridor. The sound of a scurrying rat, and no light switch to turn on.

"It's terrifying not even to have a light switch in your cell," Benita says.

Helena says, "It's unnecessary human cruelty, one more method to degrade and humiliate people to be locked up in a jail, knowing that there are rats under your bed and not even being able to turn on a light switch to see them by."

Barbara and Benita shared a cell, while Helena's "cellie" was a young prostitute and narcotics addict named Frankie "who turned out to be marvelous to me and all of us. She taught us the ropes of getting along in the prison, told us which officers were decent and which ones we ought to look out for. And she shared her precious supplies with us—soap, toothpaste, cigarettes. When you know how much those poor little possessions mean in jail, you know how generous Frankie was to us. So were most of the girls, but I'm talking about Frankie now because we came to know her not necessarily better than the other girls but sooner."

She'll never forget her first night in the jail, Helena Lewis says. She remembers every smallest detail of it: how she turned over on her bed to avoid the sight of the high window casting its shadow on the floor; how difficult it was, what effort it required to keep her head on the unyielding mattress. The walls seemed to be closing in on her. The terror of being locked up night and day for how long—five days, but it might have been five months or five years the way it seemed that night.

She tossed and turned in a kind of waking delirium, until the moonlight turned black, and on

through the blackness, until the cold, gray light of dawn once more threw the reflection of the bars on the stone floor of her cell.

"And then I knew the tortures the girls went through who were going to be in the jail not for five days but five months or five years. I had thought the House was a prison for short sentences. And then the girls set me straight. Some of them had been there for six, seven, eight years on and off. The prostitutes and narcotics addicts who came through the revolving door, who were sentenced for six months, say, served their time and were on the outside for maybe three days and then inevitably were rearrested and resentenced for perhaps a year this time. And so on."

It was time to get up. Helena said, "Frankie, my 'cellie,' said that if I wanted a shower I'd have to scramble for it. There were only two showers on our block and about twenty girls had to use them so I washed at the sink. I had no toothbrush or toothpaste except what Frankie gave me, and I had no comb. How can you be concerned about your appearance when you have no comb, no toothbrush, no face cream or even face soap? How can you be yourself? . . . Frankie said I could buy those luxuries in the canteen but that it wouldn't be open for two days. . . . I asked how the girls who had no money managed such items as toothpaste and soap and combs. She shrugged and said they either begged them, stole them or 'made love' for them.

"I made my bed and sat on it, waiting to be allowed out for breakfast. It wasn't nearly time yet, and already the morning was dragging for me. It

seemed an eternity since I'd gotten up. I discovered later that very few prisoners got up until they had to.

"The cell doors opened and we filed out for breakfast, sour-tasting oatmeal and tea or coffee with no sugar. Inmates who had sugar bought it at the commissary, paid for it with their own money. Those who couldn't pay didn't have sugar."

After breakfast, Barbara, Helena and Benita went back to their cell corridors. Since many of the other girls were out on work assignments, they stayed alone there till lunchtime.

"I had to go to the toilet," Helena says, "but there was no tissue there, and I only learned later from Frankie that toilet tissue was not provided except once at night, and that the small amount they gave you, wasn't sufficient to last through the day. Some women hoarded their tissue, carried it with them to work assignment and other places they went.

"At eleven forty-five, Frankie and the other girls on work assignment returned to the corridor and we had lunch. It was served in the dining hall. There was a long table and the food was set up in big pots or bowls and you walked up and took a plate and somebody put food on your plate. And I recall, the first afternoon I was there and we were having lunch, I naively asked for sugar for my tea, since I hadn't learned at breakfast that the girls in the House had to buy their sugar. Everybody started laughing at my request for sugar, and Mamie, another addict and prostitute we would later come to know well and rely upon and talk to at length about our integrationist activities, stood up, fighting mad, and said, 'Don't anybody laugh

at her. She's a freedom fighter. *Freedom fighter, that means Black, baby.* And then she pointed to the three of us and said, 'If anybody gives you any trouble, you just come to me.'

"Do you remember what your lunch was?" I asked Benita.

"I remember that I didn't eat it," she said.

"Why?"

Benita, who is soft-faced and gentle-voiced, said consideringly, "I'm really not a fussy eater, but, you see, I can't eat food I don't recognize. And, here, you couldn't recognize the food you were being offered. I hardly ate during the entire five days I was there." She smiled. "It was good for me. I should have been sentenced to ten days—I would have gotten very thin. I drank the tea, I drank the coffee, and this was the extent of my eating for five days. I could not eat that food. It's not edible. Without a doubt, the food was the most disgusting-looking I have ever seen. It was not fit to eat."

After the lunch none of them ate, Helena, Benita and Barbara went back to their cells and "sat around and paced and paced and sat around." Benita says she chewed on her knuckles, and Helena scratched the polish off her nails.

"I've never been so bored in my life," Helena says, "or anyway I would have been if it hadn't been for the company of Benita and Barbara. We were never taken to the library; in fact, we never knew there was one. We were never offered a book to read. Finally, Frankie got a deck of cards and made us a present of it."

"We were given some so-called recreation though. There was, across from the dining room on our floor, a sort of recreation room containing some

tables and chairs and a television set. Some of the girls played cards and some sat and watched television. As I recall it, there was a period of about forty minutes after supper when you could 'recreate.' And then, during the course of the afternoon, there was also a period during which you were permitted to go up on the roof.

"Up on the roof there were ping-pong tables—not very much by way of equipment, but there was air."

"But the worst of everything," Benita says, "the very worst was the prison health program or rather the lack of it. It's unbelievable to anyone who hasn't experienced it. What happened to me is a simple example. I had a bad cold when I went in, the kind that makes you cough all night and keeps you and everybody around you awake, and the following morning when clinic call was announced, Barbara, who was recovering from flu, and I, who had this bad cold, both answered the call for clinic. We were sent in the elevator to another floor. I think there was no doctor present at all."

"We stood in a line, and we were told to tell a matron what our complaint was. I told the matron that I had a very bad cold and that I would like something to ease the coughing, particularly at night. She said, 'Hold out your hand.' I did. And she poured fourteen pills of various sizes and colors into my hand. I said, 'What do I do with them?' She said, 'You swallow them. She'll give you some water,' pointing to another matron, who handed me a paper cup of water. I swallowed the pills."

"Well, the coughing wasn't relieved at all, and when I returned to my cellblock, I told one of the other inmates about the medication I had received,

and she laughed and said, 'Well, that's what everybody gets. That's withdrawal medication.'

"So I coughed all night that night, and the next day I reported at clinic call again, and this time I said, 'I'm not suffering any withdrawal symptoms. I have a cold and I would like something for a cold. I would like something to make me stop coughing all night.' And this time there was a nurse present, and I made it very clear to her that I was a civil rights defendant with a cold, and not a narcotics addict with withdrawal symptoms, and after insisting rather too loudly and clearly for my own peace of mind, I was given a little paper cup of cough syrup, which, by the way, I was ordered to drink then and there, although it was quite early, so one didn't need to be a doctor to realize I'd be needing further relief during the night. So I coughed again that night and kept everyone around me awake again.

"And, Barbara who was just recovering from flu, had, literally, the same experience I did. She was given proper medication during the first call she went on. But she, too, received withdrawal medication the second time around. It would have been funny if it hadn't been so hard on us and the inmates around us who had to listen to us keep on hacking."

But both Benita's and Helena's deepest compassion and sympathy, as was to be expected, were never for themselves but rather for the habitué inmates victimized by the prison's health program. Anyone who'd sat with them as I did when they told me the by no means unusual story of an inmate who had had a tooth extracted and begun to hemorrhage during the night would have known

their feelings, although their words were certainly not overly sentimental. I think Benita was talking, and all she said was, "We heard the commotion, the girls yelling for the matron to please come and help that girl. Hours went by, literally hours and hours, three or four, and, finally, somebody did come and that poor girl was removed from her cell.

"We were under the impression that she had been taken to the hospital or taken to a doctor or to the clinic. Later we were told, and this we know from hearsay, that she was taken to 'the tank' which is where they allowed narcotics addicts to sweat out their withdrawal symptoms. Hearsay or not, the thought sickened us because, you know, from the little we've learned about the House of Detention, it wasn't unbelievable. Not at all."

With every hour, although they were becoming accustomed to the conditions and to the routine, both Helena and Benita saw the House of Detention as a new and terrifying place. Both of them told me, with profound feeling, that it was impossible to go to meals, to go to recreation or even out on the corridor without being aware of the misery, the tears, the despair which those drab stone walls had witnessed. This atmosphere of suffering was, to them, almost like a living thing and never more real than in that moment of forced gaiety that is the prisoners' response to prison entertainment.

"We were at only one movie at the House of Detention," Benita tells, "and, well, it was a strange experience. All the girls were paired off—embracing, kissing, holding hands, incidentally with the lights on and in full sight of the guards. Of course, this lesbian activity also went on in the dining hall, the recreation area, the roof during recreation

times, and in the girls' cells. But, somehow, it seemed different in the movie, sadder. I remember remarking to Helena and Barbara that we seemed to be the only women in the movie that night without dates. But my heart wasn't in my humor."

Because, she says, despite the flirtation and love-making, once in a while the forced gaiety slipped, and, in its place there looked out all the loneliness and homesickness and despair of which human beings are capable.

In the midst of all their own troubles, Helena says, "And, in spite of their so-called toughness, they still had compassion enough and sufficient awareness to feel sorry for us and indignant because we were in the jail with them. They were constantly saying, 'Girls like you shouldn't be in a place like this. You don't belong here.' And, as we've said before, they couldn't hear enough about our integrationist activities."

"And, maybe," Benita adds, "our greatest feeling of well-being among them came on those nights which, incidentally, used to infuriate the officers because, to them, this seemed like the possible beginning of a riot, when the girls sang along with us:

"We shall overcome, we shall overcome,  
We shall overcome some day.  
Oh, deep in my heart I do believe,  
We shall overcome someday.  
We'll walk hand in hand,  
We'll walk hand in hand,  
We'll walk hand in hand, someday..."

"That and all the other civil rights songs we taught them.

"Listening to the girls sing 'We Shall Overcome' in their often warm and uninhibited voices would make us hopeful for them for the moment. But not for long. Because, anytime we found ourselves thinking about whether they'll help themselves after they leave the prison, we had only to think about what had happened to us during our mere five days in the House.

"Now, we went to jail for five days, knowing full well it was only five days and voluntarily, really voluntarily, because all we'd have to do in order not to have gone would have been to have paid a twenty-five-dollar fine. We went to jail only because of our strong convictions and our unwillingness to give twenty-five dollars to a city that failed to live up to its commitments. We had friends on the outside, people who were concerned about us. There was a picket line for the three of us on our only Sunday in the jail. We were not forgotten or abandoned or neglected. And yet we felt loss of identity as human beings. We felt a loss of human dignity. How much worse, how much more intolerable for the women who were there for months or even years with no friends on the outside and nobody concerned about what happened to them.

"Then, as I said, we talked a lot to the habitué prisoners about their life in the prison and about their personal lives on the outside. And they told us in no uncertain terms, bolstering, of course, our own impressions, that there was not one of them who didn't expect, sooner or later, to be back. They knew they'd be back. That jail is permeated with hopelessness. It's sad. It's tragic. It's a waste in human terms for everyone."

## 2

### They Gave Me a Quarter—A Dime for a Telephone Call and Fifteen Cents for Carfare

New York's dapper mayor, James J. Walker, first broke ground for the New York City House of Detention for Women, in 1932. The people who'd gathered to watch him were mostly native Villagers, generally even more bohemian in those days than they are today. There were a few, a very few, well-born gentlefolk who occupied the swank houses flanking Washington Square Park. And there were the middle-class men and women, professionals, white-collar workers, and a few blue-collar workers living in the large apartment buildings. And there were also the poor but respectable family folk, many of them Irish and Italian immigrants.

And there were, of course, the Night Mayor's most enthusiastic supporters and admirers, night people themselves.

To them and to everyone, Mayor Walker said, "It is my deep, my great, my profound pleasure to break ground for this new prison. . . . It will be a model prison throughout the world."

The "model prison," applauded alike by local property owners, poverty-stricken tement-dwellers, and Village bohemians, did not open its doors till 1934, two years after Walker broke ground. It was a twelve-story brick building deliberately masked from its outside and appearing more like any apartment building of its era than a jail. It had single cell facilities with "toilets in the cells and hot and cold running water" for four hundred women who were either on sentence or awaiting trial. Out of deference to the neighborhood, its outside sign, far from bearing its name, read merely as it still reads today, "Number Ten Greenwich Avenue."

During its early years, the House of Detention was hailed by the newspapers as "more of a luxury hotel than a prison" and by prison experts as "a great step forward in penology—an experiment to prove once and for all that a jail may be used for rehabilitation and not merely punishment of wrongdoers." The experts who believed the prison to be rehabilitative rather than punitive pointed in proof to the first warden, Mrs. Ruth Collins, who was well known for her fine background of experience in labor organization among women—a social worker rather than a prison-guard type. They did not take into account, however, the overwhelming obstacles no prison warden, whoever she might be,

could possibly have overcome: a budget that did not allow for professional rehabilitative personnel and also made it impossible to hire proper people even for the categories of jobs that were available.

Prison officers, receiving salaries of \$90 a month, could not be expected to have any kind of professional background. Their only requisite for employment was decent physical health and an ability to withstand a grueling schedule of nine to eleven hours daily. Doctors, although they were required to have medical degrees, could not be picked and chosen either, since their \$90 per month and free board and room demanded dedication to an all-day and all-night call schedule. They were naturally, therefore, as the majority of them still are today, properly trained in the formal sense but too handicapped one way or another to make their own way outside the prison.

The sentenced inmates of the House of Detention during its early years—much the same then as now—were prostitutes, vagrants, alcoholics, and narcotics addicts, although far less of these than there are today. They, too, vigorously lamented their "brutal officers" and "cruel doctors." They also complained of their constant contact with the women awaiting trial, who, since they were being held on such charges as armed robbery, homicide, manslaughter, and even murder, were far more aggressive than they and often managed to intimidate them.

Warden Collins backed the sentenced inmates' discontent over being thrown together with those detained for trial. She was the first to say what has been echoed and reechoed over the years by penologists concerned with the House of Detention:

"It is a fact that this institution is a schizophrenic institution because it is expected to care and provide for the sharply distinctive needs of both sentenced women and those awaiting trial. It can't be done. To try to do both jobs means that we can do neither well. It means that both groups of women must be neglected to their detriment—and our own."

Inmates and administrators were not the only ones to condemn the new prison. After the first few years of its existence, the surrounding neighbors, businessmen and apartment dwellers, were horrified at the intrusiveness of the jail in spite of its modest and respectable outer appearance—an intrusiveness beyond anything they'd expected when the jail was contemplated.

The first investigation into the House of Detention, the first of many to be undertaken through the years until the most recent one in 1965, took place in 1942, eight years after its opening. It was conducted by the Women's City Club and other interested groups which inspected the building and interviewed inmates and staff. It called the building "antiquated" and made particular note of "the two small elevators creaking with overuse." It commented on the lack of "educational, vocational, and recreational activities . . . the lack of rehabilitative facilities . . .," and it was "shocked and horrified at the overcrowding."

Many of the elements to which the 1942 Investigating Committee had reference are the same today as they were then. Or if not the same, they are worse rather than better. The building is, of course, more antiquated than it was and the small elevators creak more than they did with overuse.

And the population is overflowing the jail. On June 26, 1966, to take a day at random, there were 596 inmates in the jail which was labeled overcrowded in 1942 when the population was 487.

One June 26, 1966, Warden Mary Lindsay, speaking of the overcrowding, also emphasized the terrible dilemma Warden Collins had spoken of in 1942: the housing in one building of both sentenced inmates and women detained for trial for periods ranging from a few days to many months. In 1965, she said, the House of Detention held 6,895 detained women and 2,620 women sentenced there for varying periods.

Warden Lindsay, speaking glowingly of her staff and particularly her custodial staff, says, "Our officers are altogether different from the image the public has of them. The majority are good, kind, dedicated women who seek jobs here because they want to be of service to others. Many of them are also well educated, there are college graduates among them, and they serve as models for the inmates."

Although Warden Lindsay would seem to be overly generous in her blanket praise of the prison staff, one must nevertheless be struck by their unexpected attractiveness as a group and also by their obvious competence and effectuality. It's a difficult assignment to administer a corridor of eighty to one hundred more or less disturbed inmates, even from the point of view of ordinary daily routine: seeing to it that they rise on time, observe certain amenities of cleanliness, carry out their work assignments on the corridor, report to their vocational assignments or other activities, go to bed on

time. And the majority of the House of Detention officers seem to do their jobs on these levels with admirable ease and aplomb.

They are of a far different type, certainly from the officers who staffed the prison in 1942 and were condemned for their personal qualities by the inmates and censured for their lack of efficiency by certain Correction Department officials. If nothing else has changed greatly in the House of Detention since 1942, at least the custodial staff is infinitely better now than it was then.

Even the old-time inmates admit it. Though they remember the majority of former officers with only a very few exceptions as brutal and cruel, they recognize that there are many good officers working in the House of Detention today. They are even willing to admit, despite their natural resentment to authority, that there may be more kind and able officers in the prison than there are sadists or other deviates. They speak warmly, passionately even, of such officers as Gertrude Rebecca Green.

A prostitute, Lou Ann Jones, who has been in and out of the House of Detention nine times in the past three years, says of Mrs. Green: "She is the most understanding woman I ever met. We called her 'Ma Green.' The girls all loved and respected her. She got more respect from the girls than all the other officers put together. Anytime she was there, there was never any problem. When the other ones were there, it was hell, but the girls would be quiet when she was on duty because we all loved her so."

Lou Ann's heartfelt tribute to Mrs. Green echoes what many inmates told me about her, and there

are, to its great credit, more than one Ma Green in the House of Detention. For that, the inmates are everlastingly grateful.

They are grateful also to many officers, even those who aren't so outgoing and warm as Mrs. Green, for the small gestures of consideration they make toward them.

A longtime addict and depressive, Lucy Roth, told me this about Captain Ruth Leopold, "The first actual incident I had with her was when I was in the dining room, and she kept calling me. 'Lucy! Lucy!' I was just out of the tank by this time. I just kicked my habit and I was so weak it was hard to get up once I sat down and I couldn't understand why she was calling me away from the table and, finally, I hoisted myself up and I went over to her and I said, 'What is it, Captain Leopold? I'm eating.' And she said to me, 'Go over there and get a cup and come back here.' I couldn't imagine what the heck she wanted me to do and what did she have? She had a pitcher of fresh milk she had gotten off the diet truck and she had made a special thing of getting this fresh milk for the girls like me who just kicked their drug habits. Now, all the other officers are supposed to do this automatically. But they don't. So what happens is that sometimes the girls crowd around the diet truck and the officer doesn't bother with it herself. But Captain Leopold always bothers like she did with me the day I'm talking about. I felt so nice that she actually had remembered that I just kicked my habit and she called me away from the table and made sure I had milk and said, 'Drink it in front of me. Come on. You need it.' I thought that was the nicest thing anyone could do for me."

But an officer doesn't need to be a Ruth Leopold either in order to win the inmates. The majority of them don't demand that their officers love them and treat them tenderly. Much as they crave love and tenderness, they believe, as realistically as anyone, that discipline must be maintained in jail and that, as another long-time addict, Althea Jones, told me, "The House of D. was never meant to be a rest home."

Speaking about a "strict but fair" officer, Mary Sears, Althea says, "See, Miss Sears has gotten to be respected by the girls over the last few years, quite a lot. Oh, she's also liked by many of the girls, the thing they say about her is, 'at least with Miss Sears you know where you stand.' She obeys the rules and that's good as long as she doesn't take things out on you and give to you one minute and take away the next. You don't want an officer to be lax but just only fair. Let her not break the rules to help you but not to hurt you either."

Of course, for every report the inmates make about the warm and good and fair officers, they also describe officers (a minority, to be sure, but one to be reckoned with because it does such overwhelming harm) who behave out of their own sadistic and perverted drives. Such officers, for example, as Molly Sands, who is loathed by the inmates. The following experience of seventeen-year-old Lee Caswell, detained for waywardness, is vouched for by several women who were with her at the time it occurred.

"I was menstruating this one time," Lee says. "I was in court and I was coming back and I had to take my vaginal examination. So now I got all undressed and this officer gave me a paper towel to

put my sanitary napkin in. Well, I did. I asked her for another napkin. She told me to go throw the old one away first. Now, to throw this soiled one away I have to walk—I'm completely undressed and I have nothing on and I would have to walk all the way across the receiving room past maybe fifteen or twenty people, to do what she wanted. I refused to walk anyplace until she gave me a robe to put on. She told me, 'Now, if you don't do what I say, you're going to stay right here. You're not going up to your cell to eat or sleep, or nothing. You're going to stay right here.' I said, 'Then I'm going to stay here. If I'm going to sit here all night—I don't care.' And she made me stand there for about twenty minutes before she finally gave in and gave me what I needed."

Another House officer only slightly less loathed than Molly Sands is Ann Grassi.

A prostitute with a record of fourteen commitments to the House of Detention, Lily Roberts, says, "Every time I come to the jail I'm afraid of her because she struck the prisoners. She was always swinging at the girls, rolling up her sleeves and punching the girls. In my cell block, there was a girl there. Her name is Lola Mall and she's about twenty years old, about six feet tall, and she has got the mind of a five-year-old, and her husband threw gasoline on the subway tracks and she was arrested as an accomplice. But she was telling me she has never seen the outside world. She has always been in mental institutions, and talking to her, anybody would know she has the mind of a five-year-old girl. She doesn't belong here. And Grassi always got mad at her because when she

gave her an order, Lola was too childish to obey. Oh, she hurt Lola. She hurt her terrible."

It cannot be emphasized too strongly, however, or repeated too often in any fair analysis of today's prison as compared to the prison in the early years, that Molly Sands and Officer Grassi are exceptions rather than the rule. The worst one can say about the general run of officers is that like people generally, they are small-minded and smug in their notion that black is black and white is white and women who've once tangled with society are a different breed than they. But they're decent enough, and many of them have, on the whole, a good relationship with the women on their corridors.

If the caliber of the custodial staff has changed remarkably since 1942, which it has, and if other elements are virtually unchanged, which they are, it is important to probe the reasons behind the discrepancy. Actually, reasons don't have to be probed far since they're surface and obvious. The basic reason, as is so often the case, is economic. The custodial pay scale, a disgrace in 1942 and for many years thereafter, is vastly improved. It provides a starting salary for officers, who must be high school graduates, of \$7,426, to be increased within a three-year period to \$9,010. Captains start at \$9,889 and increase to \$10,486 in three years.

Strangely, by light of New York's properly enlightened attitude toward the prison officers' salaries, the salaries it pays House of Detention doctors are disgraceful, and if the doctors are as they are, we've small reason to expect them to be otherwise. Full-time doctors working an eight-hour tour

begin at \$9,850, or \$50 less than prison captains get.

"Isn't this a shameful thing?" Dr. Marie Shedrowitz, House Medical Director since 1942, asks in just indignation. "Isn't it shocking? How can anyone expect doctors, with the long, expensive training that's required of us, to work for so nothing a salary? How do they expect me to employ good doctors and to hold them against all the other opportunities constantly beckoning them? Why should good doctors who can do other things work in such an institution as ours for salaries that prove they aren't respected?"

And because most doctors who can "do other things" won't work in such an institution for such salaries, House medical vacancies are many and long-lasting. And up until the investigation in 1965 exposed the situation, there was no doctor on duty between the hours of midnight and eight o'clock in the morning. This, despite the doctor's own admission that physically and emotionally ill women, which many House of Detention inmates are, are likely to become sicker at night. This, in spite of the fact, that thirty-seven-year-old addict, Mrs. Carmen Rivera, died in the jail awaiting emergency transportation to Bellevue Hospital since there was no doctor to treat her on the premises.

By comparison to Mrs. Rivera's needless death, Helena Lewis's and many other women's brutal experiences with the medical staff during either routine admissions examinations, or on a day when they were ill, are not as upsetting to concerned citizens as perhaps they ought to be.

About the routine medical admissions examination, I heard, not alone from Helena, but also from

one hundred and ten former inmates I questioned about it, that it was painful, humiliating, and brutally administered. I quote the following statement from a woman, Joanne Perry, detained in the House for six weeks because she could not raise a bail bond and later found innocent of the charge against her, because it is typical:

"In the internal examination, I told the doctor that she did not use a sterilizer. She told me to mind my own business, and she pushed me back on the table. Anyway—they had two girls which were sentenced, I guess you could call them nurses' aides—and they held me down to the table because I was raising a commotion because I objected to being examined that way. Oh, they're brutal. They hurt you and you can scream, you can tell them they're hurting you and they don't care. But I did see her (the doctor) use that same probing instrument on the girl previous to me. And the doctor said, 'It's none of your business,' when I remarked on it. And I said, 'It is my business because I can catch an infection,' and she had me deadlocked—put in solitary confinement—I was deadlocked for three days."

About the routine medical care, the vast majority of inmates to whom I talked described incidents that were more rather than less harrowing than this told me by a narcotics addict, Nita Shay, about another addict, her friend, Bernice Cook.

"You know, this was very sad. It was my friend, Bernice, who got terrible pains in her head. And she was nervous. Like when she would hear the addicts screaming in agony while they were kicking, she said the pain would be so bad in her head that she couldn't stand it. She would bang her head

against the wall. It felt like her head was busting open. Everyone in the corridor would yell, 'Officer, Bernice is sick.'—'Wait, I'm on the phone.' Or 'Wait, I'm doing this. I'm doing that!' And the girls would be yelling, 'God, help that girl!' And she, Bernice, would be screaming. But the officer didn't care because the doctor didn't care. The doctor came and saw her and said, 'There's nothing wrong with her. She wants to put on a show and she's too much trouble. She's a bother.' So the officer didn't want to call the doctor for her.

"And she was screaming. Poor Bernice, you never heard such pitiful screaming in your life. She was in agony. And another girl, a big girl named Pat—. Bernice is a little girl, I don't think she's even five feet tall and doesn't weigh more than eighty pounds. And Pat was husky and about five feet eight. Pat was trying to hold Bernice down because she was in such pain. She was banging herself. Pat told the officer, 'I can't hold her any more. Get the Captain. Get the Deputy. Get someone.' We were all locked in at the time. Pat says, 'I can't hold her myself. She is too strong.' And the officer said, 'I'm on the phone. I'm on this, I'm on that.' So finally she opened the cell for poor Bernice to come out. I don't know where they were sending her. But they let her out of the cell and everyone was yelling, 'Let one or two of us out.' You know, to help hold Bernice.

"Finally, she threw the officer and she threw Pat and broke her arm. Bernice and Pat were both lying in the corridor, one with a broken arm and Bernice with her mouth bleeding from where she had banged it into the floor. And, you know, they wouldn't let the rest of us out. One of the other

girls had went and threw the lever, they have like a lever that opens all the cells on one side. It opened the cells on my side. And we all ran out. We're not supposed to do this, but we all ran out and we ran to Bernice and held her down. We put a pillow under her head, you know, a blanket to keep her from hurting herself. She was knocking her head against the stone wall. She was bleeding from her nose and her mouth. And Pat was lying there with a broken arm. And we were given a big lecture about this because we ran out of our cells to help another human being. They said—they wanted to know who let us out. That this was something wrong, that we weren't supposed to be let out. Let out to keep someone from getting killed. All their bones broken. Nobody wanted to get let out of their cells to escape or anything like that. Just to hold Bernice because she was so strong and threw this officer and threw Pat. And the doctor wouldn't come to her. She would say, 'There's nothing wrong with her.'

Unfortunately, but predictably, the doctors set the standards for the way not only they, themselves, but also everyone else in the institution will behave toward sick inmates. Other personnel, including officers who would act otherwise under different circumstances, are often (with the doctors' mostly implied but, occasionally overt approval and encouragement) callous to the inmates' needs. And ill inmates, sometimes because they resent the callousness and more often because they hope to get medical attention that's been denied them if they call dramatic attention to themselves, set fires in their cells.

According to Warden Lindsay, there were thirty-

five malicious fires set in the House of Detention in 1965 and all of them "were prompted by the girl's belief, mistaken, that they were not given proper medication. Having become accustomed to the use, I might say the overuse, of chemotherapy, they were constantly demanding pills. When the pills were denied, they became disturbed and so set fires in their cells.

One among many inmates I know who set fires in their cells as a protest against medical callousness among the officers, nurses, and doctors, was Joan Wisnieuski. She's a prostitute and a drug addict, a "nine-time loser" at thirty-one and admittedly, even by her own interpretation, far from stable.

"Sure, I fly off the handle," she says. "I get bugged and do all the wrong things. Well hell, I wouldn't be here if I didn't—if I was nice and normal, you know.

"So this time I flew off the handle because I had a terrible migraine headache—I go crazy when I get a migraine—and I begged the officer to get something for it. She kept saying, 'Later! Later!' In the meantime, I was so bugged I just got hysterical. It must have been about four o'clock when my headache first came on and here it was time for lights out. I was in terrible pain and so I stuck a pair of scissors into my arm and then began yelling that I was going to kill myself with the scissors because I couldn't get anything to relieve my pain. I put up a good façade and they took me up to the hospital.

"But what good did it do me to get there? I should have known no doctor would help me in the hospital because they never do. And this doctor,

what she did was to bandage my arm. She banded my arm but she wouldn't give me anything for the headache. She wasn't that busy in the hospital that she couldn't give me something for my headache. But she wouldn't. So I begged her. I said, 'Doctor, please—will you please listen to me?' By this time I was crying. I couldn't control myself. And the doctor wouldn't listen. She just told the officer to get me back down to my cell. So she did. But she brought me to a deadlock cell instead of my own. Because they thought my suicide attempt was strictly legitimate, they put me in a deadlock cell and took all my clothes away. I guess they figured if she can try to kill herself with scissors, she's liable to hang herself or something if she has her clothes. So here I am in the cell—nude. It was the middle of November and I was freezing. Absolutely nude. And all I had to cover myself with was a little, thin blanket. I didn't have a mattress to sleep on. Now the floor was full of water. The commode had overflowed. The water in my cell in the sink was turned off and I couldn't wash my face. I was deadlocked so I couldn't get out to get washed either. All they allowed me was my cigarettes and my matches.

"You know, for two days I didn't do anything or say anything. For one thing, I was so fighting mad I wanted to show them how I felt—so this is my punishment for wanting medicine for a migraine headache. I can take it. Whatever they're going to give, I'll take. And I did take it—as much as I possibly could and as long as I could. But then I got fever and I got this cough and I was still suffering with this migraine headache. I couldn't stand it any more.

"So I called the officer, Miss Treat. She was a little blond woman of about fifty, and if she wasn't hard of hearing, she certainly acted like she was. After about an hour of me coughing so bad and wheezing and trying my best to make myself heard, she came down the corridor. It was the same jazz, the same baloney with her and me that it always is with sick girls and officers when the doctor's orders are not to disturb them.

"What do you want, Joan?"  
"I'm sick and I want to see a doctor."  
"It's after-hours."  
"I feel like I'm burning up with fever."  
"Okay, baby. Cool it then."  
"Please call somebody for me, Officer. Please."  
"Yeah. Okay."  
"So I wait maybe an hour or so."  
"Officer?"  
"What do you want?"

"I kept asking her all night to get me some relief and she didn't do it. Then, in the morning, I started all over with a new officer. Still no help. She had the doctor's orders too, I guess. A whole day passed and nothing happened. Nighttime came and Miss Treat was back on duty. I asked again to see the doctor or at least for some medicine to help my headache. She said she'd call the hospital again and tell the doctor again that I wanted to see her. So then I asked if I could at least have a mattress and I got one after about two hours. Honest to God, may I drop dead if this isn't true—it had a nest of mice in it. I was so disgusted. I asked her for another mattress and she said, 'Are you kidding?'

"The night was over and I still had no medicine

and I still didn't see the doctor and I felt much worse. Then, in the morning, the whole hassle began all over again with a new officer I never saw before.

"I knew a psychologist in Diagnostic from my last bust—Mr. Green. I kept calling for him. Don't ask me why, but only about a half an hour after I started screaming, 'Mr. Green, Mr. Green,' the officer came and told me I could get out of my cell and go down to Mr. Green's office. I said no. As bad as I wanted to get out of that cell, I said no. I wanted Mr. Green to come upstairs and see me in the cell the way they had me. And I let him see me. . . . Well, it took them twenty-five minutes to find a sheet to put over me.

"Well, Mr. Green got me right out of the cell and took me down to Diagnostic. And this doctor from Diagnostic—not the medical department—wrote out a prescription for me. And he told the Captain that I was to get a bathrobe and a new mattress and that the water in my cell was to be turned on. The Captain assured him that everything would be done when I returned to deadlock. That was at two o'clock that afternoon. And at five-thirty, I still didn't have anything. So I started all over again with the officer.

"This was Friday night. Everyone in Diagnostic had gone home. I said to myself, 'Oh, so that's the way it goes, huh? I have to stay here all day Saturday and Sunday because nobody'll do anything for me till Monday? I don't think I could live through it.' So I called the officer again and I could hardly talk to her because I was coughing so bad. I said:

"'Officer, I am aware of the fact that this is a hard floor, there are many sick girls on this floor

and it's a hard floor to work. I am aware of these facts and I've been taking them into consideration. Every time I called you and spoke to you, I've spoken in a low voice. I've asked you, please, will you please listen to me? Well, now I'm so sick I don't care any more. All I'm telling you is that you'd better have my medicine here before ten o'clock tonight. Because if you don't, I'm going to start a fire, to burn this mattress, to put it up in flames.'

"She smiled and said, 'Yes? Well, you go right ahead, honey. All's that'll happen is you'll have an arson charge on you.'

"I said, 'All right then. I'll accept that arson charge. Because I'm in that much pain. But when I get into the courtroom I'm not going to cop out and say, I'm sorry, Your Honor. The match just fell out of my hand. If I have an arson charge on me, when I get in that courtroom, I'm going to tell them why I've got it and nobody's going to shut me up. I'll tell the judge why I set the fire.'

"She said, 'You just do that, baby. You just tell the judge.'

"So I started the fire and I was out of the cell and up in the hospital in two minutes. They weren't that busy up there that I couldn't get the medicine I needed. In fact they weren't busy. They weren't too busy to give me tranquilizers to calm me down before the officers took me to the station-house and booked me on arson."

"I went to court the next morning and stood up before this judge who asked me to give my version of the fire. And I was bugged. So what I did—I didn't talk to him but I turned around to the observers in the courtroom and I told my story to them. I was still crying and hysterical. I told ev-

everybody that all the mattresses at the House of Detention ought to be burned. I told everybody about the nest of mice in the mattress I burned. Not just about the doctors but also the terrible filthy mattresses.

"The judge was red in the face before I was done and he motioned at me to keep quiet. He said, 'Okay, ladies and gentlemen. The performance is over.'

"I said, 'The performance is not over. I'm not performing. I'm telling the truth.'

"The judge said, 'Do you realize you can get six to eight months for setting a fire on purpose?'

"Yes, Your Honor."

"Well?"

"If I get that time I'll have to do it. The way I did all the other time. If I get that time I'll go back to the House of Detention and I'll do it. . . . I started that fire on purpose."

"The judge said, 'I commit you to Elmhurst State Hospital for observation. . . .'

"At the time I accepted the judge's commitment without worrying too much. I didn't see how any three doctors could find me insane on the facts of why I started the fire.

"Still, I almost got sent to Matteawan or some loony bin for two years. I missed it by a hair. I walked into the doctors' office and there were two doctors and they said they wouldn't examine me till the third one came. Two doctors and waiting for a third one. Oh boy! I knew what that meant. It meant that, as of now, they wanted to commit me and—you know—it takes three doctors to do the job. So if there are three doctors going to examine me—But I'm not crazy. As soon as they

gave me a chance to tell them why I started the fire, they'd know I wasn't insane. . . . Yes. But suppose they wouldn't give me a chance. Oh boy!

"Well, the third doctor walked in. He had some papers he waved at the other two and said, 'Okay, these are ready.'

"When I heard that, I said, 'Wait. Wait a minute, Doctor. Don't you want to know why I started the fire in the penitentiary?'

"One doctor, Dr. Posner, who also comes to the House of Detention sometimes, said, 'Tell us.'

"I told them. I felt like I was pleading for my life and I talked loud and fast.

"But nobody seemed to be listening too hard.

"I started stalling for time and praying for a miracle. I said, 'Look, before you put your signatures on any paper sending me away, I haven't been tested psychologically in any way. Give me a battery of psychological tests, of intelligence tests. I don't care what you ask me, ask me. I'm completely oriented, believe me.'

"Dr. Posner looked at me and smiled but I wouldn't be misled because he was pleasant. I found out that with headshrinkers the ones who act nicest to your face can be the crummiest behind your back. So anyway, Dr. Posner asked me what year and month it was and also who was the President of the United States. I answered his questions and he turned around to the other two doctors and he said, 'Well, I guess she is oriented.'

"I start a fire for a good reason like I had and the doctors think I'm crazy. I answer a couple of dopey questions and all of a sudden I'm sane again.

"So that's how close I came to be committed to

Matteawan because I got so bugged at the H. of D. It made me wonder how many girls and women who are there don't really need to be there. Because I myself could have very easily been sent even though I'm far from a psycho."

Joan's analysis of her emotional condition is inaccurate. The records show her to be a diagnosed schizophrenic who has spent time in mental hospitals as well as the House of Detention and other jails. To judge from her record, in fact, one can't help but wonder why so emotionally ill a woman keeps landing in jail instead of a hospital. The reason, according to Warden Lindsay (she has been plagued in recent years with a great rash of inmates who are even more obviously mentally ill than Joan Wisnieuski), lies to a large extent in the effective use of chemotherapy to get and keep people outside of mental hospitals who would otherwise have to be in them.

"What has happened since chemotherapy," she says, "is that the hospitals discharge patients with instructions to keep on their pills. But the patients, being who they are, don't follow the instructions and most of them have no families to supervise them and see that they do what they must. And it isn't long before they become sick again and go out into the street and commit some crime and get picked up and land here. Because we're the end of the line. They come here after they've been everywhere else. And sometimes, you know, we call the hospitals that discharged them and ask if they'll have them back. But we might as well save our breath because the hospitals couldn't care less once they're on our hands."

Warden Lindsay says that "the psychotic women who belong in hospitals rather than jails are the greatest single problem" she and her staff are facing today. How do you explain to the bulk of your inmates—whom you must hold responsible for their acts and treat punitively for infractions against rules—the whys and wherefores of your different behavior with the psychotics? You can't, and so there's a saving around the jail that "the only way you get treated right in the House of D. is to be a little off." And because the girls have got more than a little right in what they're saying, too many pretend to go psychotic so they can have some of the advantages the psychotic girls get handed on a silver platter.

The advantages include residence in the Psychiatric Pavilion, which is by far the most comfortable and even cheerful part of the jail, complete privacy in their cell arrangements, constant access to a television set, and daily half-hour sessions with a psychiatrist paid by the city, who devotes his hours as a half-time employee to the twenty or so inmates generally housed in the Psychiatric Pavilion. It seems ironic that these few inmates should receive services in jail they should rather have gotten in mental hospitals, but most likely didn't, at the expense of a large number of inmates who must be in a jail rather than a hospital because no known facts about them warrant their being hospitalized.

Warden Lindsay, with good reason, is proud of the House of Detention's Diagnostic Department. There is a full-time psychiatrist and there are three part-time ones in the Diagnostic Department.

And there are three full-time psychologists and six full-time social workers.

"Of course," Warden Lindsay says, "we could use twice and three times that number, ideally. But we're grateful for what we have and we do think we're able, through both group and individual therapy, to give the girls more than fairly sufficient service."

Actually, the Diagnostic Service, despite its real positiveness, is unable to give the inmates anywhere near "more than fairly sufficient service." If they did, then certainly the great majority of inmates would not be released, as they are now, with thirty cents and no plans for living in the community.

"When I was released after my first sentence," twenty-year-old addict Rena Somers says, "they gave me a quarter—a dime for a telephone call and fifteen cents for carfare. But I had no one to call with my dime and no place to go with my fifteen cents."

The truth is that, no matter how we may rationalize it, the release procedures for the majority of girls have improved little over what they were in 1942. Now there are volunteers, the Friends Service Committee and members of the Friendly Visitors of the House of Detention, who are somewhat involved in the release program, and there were none in 1942. But how much, after all, can untrained volunteers with limited budgets help in resolving such overwhelming and formidable problems as House of Detention inmates will face on returning to the outside world? Warden Lindsay points up such "accomplishments" of the Friends Service Committee and the House of Detention

Friendly Visitors as "supplying two girls with complete new outfits and paying several weeks' rent for three girls so they'd be enabled to get back on their feet." In spite of the warden's "samples and examples," however, it seems obvious with even the most cursory consideration that the biggest change in release procedure is that where inmates were formerly provided with only fifteen cents, five for a telephone call and a dime for carfare, they now receive thirty.

In spite of much proof to the contrary, Warden Lindsay and former Commissioner Anna M. Kross maintain that the prison has been vastly improved in every way except one. The House of Detention is as dangerously overcrowded today as it has ever been and the overcrowding does help create many problems, including that of sanitation. Though Warden Lindsay states that, since an exterminator comes to the jail often, there is no difficulty there with roaches, mice, and rats, the inmates, all one hundred and ten with whom I spoke, tell a different story. Nineteen-year-old Jane Lewis, held in detention for nine weeks last year, speaks for many inmates when she says, "Oh God, roaches and mice. The place was corroded with them. The back of my neck was all broken out with some kind of bites while I was there. And this rat, I saw it right in my cell. It was running all through the doors, right there, and I cried out and hollered out one night. And that wasn't the only time I saw a rat. There were others."

Another problem in the jail that can be blamed in part, but only in part, on the overcrowding, which forces two inmates to live intimately together

er in a cell too small for one, is the overt, violent, and frighteningly prevalent homosexuality.

"Homosexuality is bound to be present in any situation where the sexes are segregated," Warden Lindsay says. And she is, of course, right as far as she goes. But she doesn't go far enough. She takes no account of the fact that homosexuality in the House of Detention, unlike homosexuality in other institutions that segregate the sexes but aren't jails, is a double-faceted thing. There is first the kind of homosexuality on the part of two inmates drawn together out of their own needs, loneliness, disappointment with the men in their lives, any one of a hundred different reasons, including the fact that they're shut away from men and need sexual outlet. Their outlet may involve activities ranging all the way from desiring to be in each other's company, to friendly kissing, to serious petting, and finally to actual physical sexuality. Such voluntary relationships, no matter what the degree of intimacy involved, cannot be condemned wholesale. In some cases, notably where the woman has never before related to any human being, they may even be therapeutic. And evidence would indicate that the largest number of homosexual relationships in the House of Detention are voluntary or, at worst, cases where one partner has manipulated the other into becoming her lover. Administrative control of such relationships under the circumstances is next to impossible, and neither the administration nor the staff of the House of Detention can be blamed because they have not been able and doubtless never will be able to stamp homosexuality out of the jail.

The House of Detention staff and administration

must be severely blamed, however, if there is a sufficient number of cases where homosexual prisoners use force in order to "make square women." For it is up to the staff and administration to protect inmates who are unable to protect themselves—girls like seventeen-year-old Patricia Sanders, sixteen-year-old Mary Lowe, and nineteen-year-old Miriam Claiborne.

Patricia Sanders, in detention as a wayward minor, tells about her first (incidentally not her last) homosexual experience. "This bulldyke, she feel my tits and tried to take my clothes off . . . in the shower room. Well, they give you about ten minutes to take a shower and there's two persons be in there. Well, I didn't know, so this girl was in there. . . . I call her 'girl.' I guess she is . . . I don't know . . . and so after I got in there, so she say, 'I was looking at you.' So I asked her, 'Why?' So she said, 'Because I kind of like you.' So I say, 'Well, girl, I don't like girls to like me.' And so she said, 'Come here.' So she grabbed my tits, and I got scared, and I started calling the guards, but no guards come, I don't know why but they don't for a long time. And after that, then she tried to tear my clothes, pull my clothes off, and I kept banging on the door, banging on the door. So some of the girls run and peep through the hole, you know, glass in the door, and she saw them. Then that's how she let me loose, and they call the guard, and the guard come and opened the door and I got out. But, you know, the guard heard me scream before the other girls made her come. Why'd she have to wait so long?

"And this bulldyke ain't the only one. Whenever

I went into the shower, a girl grabbed ahold of me."

Mary Lowe, waiting in detention for her trial on the charge of malicious mischief, says, "These two girls in the cell next to me—Big Sis and Stony—they were the leaders of the prison there. They had a lot of freedom to roam up and down and they were more or less the king and queen of the whole prison. They were always in bed together, like on the same cot. They were always kissing each other, like a man and a woman. . . . And the other girls—lesbians—was all around. And one time, the cell doors was unlocked and the officer was no place around my place and this Big Sis that was like the king came on my cot and touched me. She said, 'You like this, baby? Well, you better like it because it's a racket and you got to belong or get hurt. You'll get killed if you don't join and the officers won't do nothing.' And she said, 'If you don't believe it, tell the officer what I said and you see what she do. Nothing.' So I told her (the officer) and she looked like she didn't hear me. So then I knew it was a racket and I better join. I knew it's a racket because the officers would let the older girls out of C Block go into A and B. There were younger girls there, teen-age girls . . . kissing. Arms around them, and the guards right there, standing right there, and I saw that with my eyes, and nobody tell me this. I saw it. The girls from A and B are let out and the women in C Block are in the corridor, out of their cells. And I saw a young girl come to the gate. There was a guard, a tall, brown-skinned guard with a ponytail hairdo. She was there, right there, and I saw this teen-age girl kiss this woman named Ann through the bars. The next

afternoon, I saw two teen-age girls come to C Block again, and the same guard opened the gate and let the girls into C Block. That girl who I saw kissed Ann the day before went to Ann's cell with her. I saw them naked together in bed. The young girl was on top making love. I saw another girl, teen-age girl, go into Big Sis's cell, and I saw them with Big Sis on the top of her making love. Sis could go wherever she wanted in the halls, and she came in my cell again and made me suck her. I didn't want to do it but I was afraid, so I did."

Probably the most terrible of all the terrible stories I heard about homosexuality from inmates who'd experienced its violence was told to me by nineteen-year-old Miriam Claiborne. I met Miriam first in June of 1965, a few days after she'd been released from the jail. We sat in her bedroom-kitchenette apartment, she, her husband, and I leaning on the white porcelain table which held artificial roses in a yellow plastic container, the only colorful touches in the whole drab room, stuffy, noisy, messy with an empty whiskey bottle, beer and Coke containers, and other remainders of the weekend. Miriam was a small girl, careworn despite her youth, timid and bewildered at why I'd come to see her of all the women out of the House of Detention. Her husband looked at me out of opaque, expressionless eyes for a while and then, without turning from me, said to Miriam, "You can show her."

Miriam stood up, unzipped the sleeveless leather jacket she wore in place of a blouse, and rocking slightly on her heels, looked down at me but not at my face. She undid her brassiere and pointed out

with her finger, one by one, three small burns between her breasts.

I don't know how long her husband and I sat at the table while she stood beside me. One moment her face and eyes were hard and then, suddenly, she was crying bitterly and childishly.

I heard loud drilling outside. There were cars honking. I tried to think of something to say and couldn't. Fists clenched, Miriam watched me like a boxer poised to spring.

"Tell her about it, Miriam," her husband said.

"The bulldykes and the femmes is called the lower and the higher class," Miriam said. "The wife is the lower class. If you don't belong to any class you are the one who come out with bruises. If you act like a man even if you don't feel like it, then you're in the higher class. If you go along in the lower class as a wife, you'd get protection from the bosses that are the bulldykes. If you don't have anything to do with them, then you get no protection. It's something like a club."

"Tell her about the scars, Miriam."

"If you're nice," Miriam said, "you can get everything you want in the jail. I know how that works because I had the opportunity to be a lesbian. I had the opportunity to do anything I wanted to. But I stayed in my cell because it hurt me to my heart to be there."

Her husband told her, more severely this time, to tell me how she'd gotten her scars.

She said, "You figure there's safety in jail and you wind up that you still might as well be out in the streets; it's worse than in the streets. You don't have any weapons in jail to defend yourself.

... A girl in the higher class came in my cell and I love my husband—I love that mans more than myself. They come in and you have to fight your way out like a tiger. Then they fight you and put scars on you. I have cigarette burns on me from the higher class. Two dykes had me against the wall and the third burned me with a cigarette."

Her husband said, "Now she told you, I got to go. Ask her questions if you want."

I sat, looking up at Miriam and trying to think of something to say.

"I came home with a boisterous attitude," Miriam said, "covering up. Putting everything outside and crying on the inside because your heart is still aching. Him and I talked and I didn't tell him everything, what I done after they burned me. That I let them do what they wanted. Because I don't talk my business to everybody. And I didn't tell him. Because he will worry if I changed to him. He wouldn't know whether I would change or what. Because he loves me. So you have to hide things to keep love."

"Miriam," I asked, "did you tell the officers in the House of Detention about your burns?"

"Them? No. They knew by theirself."

"What if you told your lawyer about your cigarette burns?"

She shrugged. She had "no lawyer of my own." Her last defense had been conducted by Legal Aid and she didn't remember the name of the lawyer who'd been assigned to her. She had another case pending now and Legal Aid may assign her the same lawyer she had before. There's no sense talking to him. All he can do is to report what's happened

to the judge. And supposing the judge attempts to check Miriam's story, supposing he calls her floor officers into court.

"The officers would say, 'It happened at night. We didn't know nothing about this.' Or else they'd say, 'She did it to herself.' You can say anything you want but if the odds are against you, nobody hear you when you tell the truth. . . . And I'm afraid. Nobody except them knows what happened to me because we're not supposed to open our mouths. If you tell and they find out they'll kill you when you go back in the House. Or something—they'll wreck you some way.

"I know one girl that—she told a lawyer about the racket—and when she went back in the House I know this other girl that bought a tweezer and pulled all of her important hairs away because of the lesbian. And nobody helped her. The officers didn't. They don't want to be bothered."

Violent homosexuality is as great a problem on the corridors for sentenced women as it is on the detention corridors where Patricia Sanders, Mary Lowe, and Miriam Claiborne were held. It may be even a greater problem on the corridors for sentenced women, although it is not as dramatic because 80 per cent of sentenced women, being prostitutes and narcotics addicts, are of a type quite like one another and very much unlike the felons arrested for burglary and robbery and forgery. The felons, generally bulldykes in the jail, are the patrician class, while the prostitutes and addicts are here, as they are in the world outside, the raff and chaff nobody cares about. And because they know it well, they have no enterprise or aggressive ener-

gy in them and are unbelievably apathetic in the face of the worst kind of abuse and ill-treatment. Since that is their way, therefore, they can hardly be expected to resist the homosexual racket leaders but rather accept, without fuss, whatever relationship is proffered to them.

To understand the passivity of the majority of sentenced women toward aggressive homosexuals is to understand also that prostitutes and narcotics addicts are so typical they almost become cases in point of the class of people economist Michael Harrington has named the "new poor," in his book *The Other America*. The House of Detention narcotics addicts are emotionally desperately ill people, and the House of Detention prostitutes are, in reality, the bankrupts of their profession. Prostitutes and addicts, both, are, as Michael Harrington says all contemporary poor people are, "those who, for reasons beyond their control, cannot help themselves. All the most decisive factors making for opportunity and advance are against them. They are born going downward, and most of them stay down. They are victims whose lives are endlessly blown around and around. Their poverty casts them into a vicious circle they cannot usually break out of. . . .

"Being poor is not the simple fact we have always thought it to be but a way of looking at reality, a series of attitudes, a vastly special way of life of people who are altogether different from us and whom we cannot help so long as we make no effort to understand them."

Perhaps the House of Detention for Women, as much as anything happening to New York City addicts and prostitutes today, is living proof of their

fatalistic thesis that, if you're born poor, you can expect to be exploited by society. The House of Detention is a deceit perpetrated on the citizens of New York and an outrage against the poor people who are its inmates. It purports to be a prison designed, at least in part, to keep good citizens safe from such dangerous criminals as cannot be contained except by the use of maximum security measures. In reality, though, the vast majority of the so-called dangerous criminals in the House of Detention are the female failures of New York—sickly, dirty, cowed, and beaten women caught in the vicious circle of poverty and unable to help themselves out of it. They are the rejects of society, and of the city's economy. And the House of Detention is, therefore, a ghetto, a poor farm for women who haven't the strength to fight anyone's battles, including their own. The idea of needing or using a maximum security prison in which to detain them would be laughable if it weren't so tragic. The House of Detention, if you judge it by both its pitiful inmates and its harsh, inexorable, vengeful program, is a microcosm of the unjust, unbalanced world to which society always condemns its poor people.

The true-life stories of sentenced women in the House of Detention for Women—Joyce Kranjewski, whose father is a misplaced coal miner; Bertha, Cora May, and Cindy Green, descendants of dispossessed Black sharecroppers who could never find a place in New York; and Molly McGuire, vagrant and daughter of vagrants—are not just biographies of five unlucky women but are, rather, exemplifications of the lives and motivations of

hundreds of women like them in the House of Detention for Women and many thousands like them in the "other America" where poor people live.

# 3

## Here Are Vera and Me in the Nude When He Pulls Out His Badge

Name—Joyce Krans (Kranjewski)

Age—20

Education—Elementary School. Some High School

Marital Status—Single

Number of Times in the House of Detention for Women—Five. Has Four Sentences for Prostitution and One for Possession of Narcotics.

Joyce Krans, with blue eyes and straight blond hair, spews the most vulgar words she knows at potential customers in an attempt to distract them from the girlishness of her appearance. But she seldom succeeds. Aside from the "squealers' mark," the scar on her face going from her mouth to her forehead, she looks younger than her twenty years. Even under her many layers of old, dirty make-up,

even in spite of her eyelashes matted with mascara applied and reapplied, there is a youthful, almost childish quality about her. Only recently a fifty-year-old customer who had gone to a hotel room with her took a good look by the garish, overhead light, rushed into the pants he'd removed in such a hurry, and ran out of the room, calling over his shoulder that he knew he was a heel and all that, but even he wasn't bad enough to go to bed with a little girl.

"But I'm not a little girl," Joyce said desperately. "And I know a lot. I'll do anything you want, mister. Anything you want. No holds barred."

The first time I met Joyce Krans she told me about the "no holds barred" approach she uses along the street, in common with the older prostitutes who feel they cannot meet the normal competition in the ordinary way. She tells potential customers, in one way or another, something like: "Don't be misled by that brash, buxom, mature-seeming girl, mister. Come with me if you want your money's worth. No holds barred." If the men don't believe she would keep all the promises she makes, if they seem unconvinced of her desire to follow through on the acts she says she will perform with them, she holds her hands and arms out for them to see. The hands have ugly purple streaks running down to the knuckles. The veins look dried up.

"See, mister, I'm all strung up. I know what you heard about junkies losing their nature. But what maybe you don't know is—well, I'll do anything for junk. Believe me, anything, mister. Just tell me what you want. Try me out. You don't have to pay me if I'm not as good as I promise I'll be."

Joyce Krans was born Joyce Kranjewski in a mining town in Pennsylvania where she spent the first eleven years of her life. Her father, Stanley Kranjewski, was a miner employed by the last coal mine that operated in his area, and Joyce, the fourth child, also had two younger brothers and a younger sister. A much-handled snapshot she carries in her purse with her shows her to have been, at ten, a year before she and her family came to New York, a heavy, chunky girl ("I'm supposed to be heavy," she says, "and it's only the junk that keeps me so skinny") with long, smooth hair and a gay, happy smile.

Joyce says, when she brings herself finally to talk about "the days before I got like this," that her early childhood was, on the whole, a happy one. She remembers herself laughing a great deal and dancing Polish folk dances with enjoyment and zest and baking braided bread when her mother baked and being able to sew a fine seam that was her mother's and grandmother's pride. And she remembers herself dressed, on Sundays and holidays, in colorful, starched, and clean-scented dresses.

It is hard to know with an addict like Joyce how much of her story about her childhood, obviously infinitely satisfying to her in its details, is true. And it is especially hard to know how much of what she says about her father, the hero of her childhood, is fact and how much is the fiction it sometimes sounds like. If you want to believe her, however, her father, before he came to New York, was one of those miners out of folklore and legend. He prided himself on his ability to live with danger, work hard, fight hard, drink hard, love

hard. And when Joyce talks about her father loving hard, she's not talking only about his Saturday-night forays (young as she was, she'd been aware of them) but also of the way he loved his wife and his children. There aren't any men around any more like Joyce's father used to be. You should just have seen him in the good days—dramatizing for Joyce and her brothers and sisters the living history of the long and bloody United Mine Workers union struggles against the mine owners. He was beautiful to behold as he strode up and down Joyce's small home, his miner's helmet stuck on his head, and sang the fabled Mine Workers fighting songs in his deep baritone voice. He with his proud mountain man's walk, always pluming himself and riding the high horse, chockful of swank and pomposity that would have been offensive in a man who wasn't so handsome but was wonderful in him.

But Stanley Kranjewski never rode the high horse any more after the Black Monday in April of 1958 when the mine he worked in closed down and he and hundreds of other miners found themselves jobless. He went out as usual that day at five o'clock in the morning and came back home at noon while Joyce was there for lunch. His eyes were red so she surmised, unbelievable though it seemed, that he'd been crying. He sat in the kitchen in a sad, stern silence that surrounded everyone in the family like a shroud and then he got up and, still not speaking, left the house to go downtown. He didn't come home all night, and in the morning, Joyce and her brother went to look for him.

Stanley Kranjewski, sick and drunk as Joyce had never seen him before, accompanied her home

and brought three of his friends, also former miners, along with him. The four of them sat around Joyce's kitchen, "crying in their beer" and talking despairingly, but realistically, about their futures. Here we are, they said, forty, forty-one, forty-four years old, physically strong but we've lived all our lives and raised our families in this town and we don't know anyone except other coal workers like ourselves and we don't want to know anyone else. Our hearts are here and we don't want to leave here; we couldn't live anyplace else and feel at home. We'd feel dead away. The only place we're alive is here in our town and the question is . . . how can we support our families without leaving our homes?

Some of the men, their pride gone with their jobs, began working as orderlies in hospitals and institutions and as janitors and stockmen in the few stores in and around the vicinity of their town. Stanley Kranjewski, himself, worked for a while, at a fraction of his former pay, in a garment shop that came to town to escape the union in New York. He was fired from there because he didn't take the foreman's orders with sufficient humility to suit him.

"Well, my father got another job after he was fired from the factory," Joyce says. "He, himself, never had to stay home and take care of the house. Now, many men in our town did housework and took care of the kids while the women worked because some of those dress factories wanted the women to work there instead of men. But my father, he never had to do the housework because he had one job or another all the time."

But Stanley Kranjewski, although he tried des-

perately to improve his jobs and to at least stay constantly employed, could not care for his family. Joyce remembers every step of the way her family took from their former comparative affluence to their final devastating poverty. First, the "luxuries" that had been bought on time went—the television set and the washer-dryer and the refrigerator-freezer. And the car was sold. Then Joyce's brothers quit going to school and began working at temporary jobs with their father. And Joyce's sister Betty, who was fifteen, began wearing tight dresses and staying out late and bringing home money her father cursed her for but took and spent for food anyway.

And then, at last, the ultimate tragedy the whole family had been dreading occurred. The Kranjewski house was taken because of mortgage payment default. The Kranjewskis received a Registered, Special Delivery letter from the bank "and it was very funny that the letter came at night," Joyce says, "after the whole family was sleeping. It was so rotten for it to come at night. I'll never forget the way it happened. In the letter, they told us to leave our house; it was like the straw that broke the camel's back with us all, especially my father. It cracked him, it really did, and it cracked all of us. I'll never forget it."

Mr. Kranjewski, shivering in his pajamas, came out of the bedroom when the mailman rang the bell and grabbed the letter out of his hand. Before he even opened the letter, he surmised what was in it and shouted out, "So this is the way they do business in St. Michael's when a man hasn't got a job. At last we hear from the bank. They send us letters to tell us, 'Get out of your house. Robbers!

Murderers!' He read the envelope over and over again by the light of the candle Mrs. Kranjewski held. 'Mr.—Stanley—Kranjewski. Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Kranjewski.' The address on the envelope says 'Mr. and Mrs. Kranjewski'? Like we're people just like everybody else. That's what comes of living in a place all your life and owning property in it. With your wife, you own a house, and the mine you've been working since you were a boy closes down and, all of a sudden, you can't pay on the house you already paid so much on and they tell you you should give them your property. Leave your property to them. Go on off like a dog and let them have your house. A Registered, Special Delivery letter from the bank which knows you since you were a boy to tell you you don't own your property any more."

Somehow, through the intervention of a host of sympathetic relatives and friends, Mr. Kranjewski was able to "save" his house from the bank and, for a short time, he got a new lease on life. He kept saying he'd hang on in his town and things would get better. He even began to believe his old mine would open up again and he'd be enabled to go back to mining.

"But then, one of my sisters got sick and there was no money for doctors, so we went on relief. We had to."

Joyce Krans, describing how her family shied away from accepting relief for so long and how anguished her father became when he had, finally, to "get us put on the dole," contradicts, as do many girls and women in her position to whom I've spoken, the image conservatives hold in which people facing impoverishment race to the nearest relief

office. The fact is that as Michael Harrington points out so effectively in *The Other America*, the opposite is true. It was certainly true for Stanley Kranjewski. The last thing that Stanley Kranjewski, with his pride and spirit, wanted was to "go to welfare." There is no question but that if his daughter hadn't become ill and tipped the scales against continued independence for him once and for all, he would have stuck with the humiliation of his low-paying jobs in preference to accepting the worse humiliation of placing his family on the relief rolls. And there is also no question but that Stanley Kranjewski and his family, including Joyce, would have been infinitely better off if he had managed to avoid going on relief.

"The worst thing of everything that happened to my father," Joyce explains, "at least I think it's the worst, is when they put a lien on his house and said when he and my mother die, they're—the relief people—are supposed to get what they've got, until what they gave us in relief would be paid off.

"My father came home drunk and told us that, and you know, he cried. It was sad and, you know, that was the last time I ever felt sorry for him. Because, you know, I think that was the last time he ever cared about my mother and us kids. His family. I really think it was the last time he worried over what happened to us. He never worried after we moved to New York. He was so hurt he cried and he never did that again in New York."

Stanley Kranjewski was hurt beyond the hope of salvation because the bureaucratic maze of Pennsylvania—and United States—relief red tape shattered, once and for all, his American dream of saving so as to pass on opportunities to his children. Once

he knew that, he felt himself to be less than a man. That, along with all else that had happened to humble him, changed him altogether from the person he'd once been. He began to feel a reject and an outcast and to develop a distrust of everything and everyone around him, including his own family. Feeling no one cared about him because he no longer deserved either respect or affection, he gradually stopped caring about anyone else.

Once she begins talking about them, Joyce's memories of deprivation, humiliation, and loss during her early years in New York pour out of her. In New York, there were cold, stark streets where you could walk all day and all night and never meet anyone you knew. And there was a small grocery on Fort Washington Avenue near 178th Street where your family could run up a bill, yes, but the bill of shame in facing the grocer's pitying eyes was sometimes too high to pay.

In New York, one had a place to live in the basement because one's mother had taken over the job of janitor after trying and failing at several jobs outside the house. She'd scrub the hallways and stairs three flights up after midnight. But she changed completely from the warm, affectionate woman she'd been. Now she was still absorbed with her family but in an altogether different way than she'd been before. Despite her hard work, she never neglected her house and spent whatever money she earned on her children's necessities. She fed and clothed them as well, better, than she could afford, but her interest in them didn't seem to go farther than their physical care. Joyce doesn't remember her mother having the time or inclination to give her children a kiss or a look of

love in New York. She can't remember a tender movement of her mother's hand. She can't remember her mother ever giving a little present to a child after her family came to New York; never a dime or a penny to a child.

"After a while, us kids got to feel like she wasn't our mother," Joyce says. "I mean, she cooked and gave us clothes and that was all we expected. You never went to her if you had trouble like in school. She didn't even care what marks we got on our report cards. Except for cooking and cleaning, it was like we didn't have a mother in the house."

And then, one day, Joyce's mother was gone completely out of the house. She died giving birth to a baby who was born dead.

After Mrs. Kranjewski died, Joyce felt torment over the way she'd resented her while she was alive and the way she still resented her memory, although she tried not to. She was still bitter about her mother and guilty over her animosity when I met her more than six years after Mrs. Kranjewski's death. She told me, when I asked her, that there'd been nobody in her life after her mother died with whom she could discuss the guilt and bitterness that drove her so hard. One would think that, since she'd been under the aegis of social workers since almost the day of her mother's death, there would have been some one of them to have probed her feelings and even perhaps guided her to a realization that there'd been some good in her mother and that the "hardness" Joyce resented so had been a matter of necessity. It is conceivable, knowing Joyce today, that if she had been guided to respect the good in her mother, she might also have achieved some respect for herself.

The New York City Welfare Department, therefore, failed her just as her parents did by not coping with the profound psychic problem of her feeling over her mother as well as her material problems of food, shelter, and clothing. Even if the welfare workers were, as they doubtless must have been, either too overburdened by their heavy case loads or too inadequate in training to cope with so severe a problem, they had a responsibility to refer her to people who might have been able to help her, such people, for instance, as the social workers in a psychiatrically oriented family service society in New York.

A family service society in New York, staffed by well-trained social workers and by consulting psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers, is well able to aid girls like Joyce Krans was before she became a prostitute. But there is a good reason why a family service society in New York does not help such girls. It has, unfortunately, not much contact with them. It hasn't, to date anyhow, too many ways of reaching and drawing them into its program. Joyce Krans knew nothing about a family service society and its unique services that might have benefited her so much. And chances are that even if she had known, she would not have sought it out. In order for Joyce to have availed herself of the facilities of a family service society, she would have had to have been led there by the hand. And since there was no one to lead her, she went on suffering with her emotional disturbance, went on hurting herself because of her unresolved inner problems, until she became, as she had to become, a police case.

Joyce's first "run-in with the police" when she

was fourteen resulted in her being sentenced to the New York State Training School for Delinquent Girls where, it was hoped, she would be "rehabilitated." In spite of the New York State Training School staff of trained psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers, however, Joyce found no one in two years who helped her work out her feeling toward her mother or, for that matter, her father.

"I hated my father so much after my mother died," Joyce says. "He made us kids being on relief even worse than it was. The way he used to squeeze blood out of his pennies so that the kids never had anything, not even what the relief wanted us to have."

Joyce says that her father never gave her enough money to buy "halfway decent" clothes and that she was the worst-dressed girl in school. She says that the lack of money coupled with the fact that she felt herself "ugly as sin" because her skin became pimpled after her mother died and because she was from Pennsylvania and not as smart or sophisticated as the other girls were, was "enough to make me want to die. I used to cry myself to sleep every night."

"The real hell was when my father said he couldn't afford to buy me a graduation ring and a white dress although the Welfare'd given him the money, you know. All the girls were wearing the same kind of dresses, just as all the fellows were wearing the same kinds of dark jackets and white trousers. It was terrible. I knew I would die of shame if everybody had a ring and I didn't and a lot of the girls were wearing theirs and asked me where mine was and I told them, you know, that I ordered it, but I couldn't keep saying that forever.

And I knew I wouldn't go to graduation if I had to be the only girl in my class in a different dress. I just wanted to die, and I hated my father, absolutely hated him like poison.

"And I didn't go to my graduation, I didn't have the dress and I didn't have the ring and I didn't go. On graduation night, instead of going to my graduation, I went with this boy, Tom, to this place he used to call the 'clubhouse'; it was sort of a shanty behind some billboards on a vacant lot. I went with him and we necked. And the next night, I went with him again and we necked.

"I got home and my father saw my dress all mussed and asked me where I was. I wouldn't tell him and he said, 'Have you still got your cherry?' I wouldn't answer that either so he slapped my face and locked me in the bedroom."

Tom was not the only boy in the club Joyce necked with. "I went with a couple of his friends too. They liked me and I wanted to be liked by them."

Gradually, she drifted from necking sessions to more intimate relations in the clubhouse ("I didn't worry about my 'cherry'"), until she was having sexual relations with many of the boys in the neighborhood. She would often "take care" of three or four boys at a time. It didn't mean anything to her, she says, and asks, "Why shouldn't I do it if it's such a big deal to them?" She emphasized, over and over, that what she achieved from her early promiscuity was the feeling that she was able to give something to the boys in the clubhouse that she'd never gotten herself—attention.

"But I was never a prostitute before I went to the Training School," she adds. "I was a freeby. I

never charged any of the boys I went with a penny, and if you could meet any of them today, they'd tell you I'm telling the God's honest truth.

"So although I was not a prostitute—even though—a cop picked me up and he brought me into the court, Girls' Term."

New York City's Girls' Term for the arraignment and trial of troubled and delinquent girls to sixteen years of age was, when Joyce was brought there, an admirable experiment in its essence. It was set up as a social rather than a criminal court and was staffed by the most socially oriented judges in the city's judiciary, as well as by well-trained social workers who probed a girl's background before she came up for trial. The trial itself was conducted with informality and more warmth than could generally be expected in a courtroom. A girl's privacy was guarded so that the courtroom was closed to spectators (the judge directed me to pretend I was a stenographer during the times I sat in on proceedings), and her offense was not formally recorded by the court. Naturally, newspaper reporters were not admitted into the courtroom.

Despite its excellent intent, however, New York City's Girls' Term, like most agencies whether well intentioned or not, did not mete out the same justice to poor young disturbed girls as it did to rich and middle-class ones. Its justice was inequable and double-faceted. This fact is most dramatically illustrated by a consideration of the court's disposal of its cases of promiscuity. There is no question but that, although promiscuous girls of poor and of the upper and middle classes are treated alike in the ways that don't basically matter (they get the same long and involved social-service investigation;

the same kindly judge presides in the same warm manner in all their cases; the courtroom is kept clear of reporters and other outsiders for poor and rich girl offenders alike), they are treated extremely differently in the way that matters most—in the sentences they receive for their flouting of the law.

Few, if any, rich or middle-class girls brought before Girls' Term for promiscuity have been confined to the New York State Training School for Delinquent Girls in Hudson, New York, an institution to which the city sends very many of its twelve- to sixteen-year-old sentenced girls. Instead, the promiscuity of rich and middle-class girls who come to the court's attention is dealt with in a proper and progressive manner; it is interpreted by the social workers and the judge to be a symptom of a serious emotional illness for which a girl's parents or guardians must provide psychotherapeutic care or even psychoanalysis if that seems indicated. And anyone who knows the New York State Training School for Girls (one might call it, not inaccurately, the New York State Training School for Poor Promiscuous Girls) also knows that that place is not an alternate for psychotherapy or psychoanalysis. Joyce Krans, for instance, except for her one admissions interview, didn't see a psychiatrist or psychologist during the whole two years she spent there.

According to House of Detention records, more than 30 per cent of its inmates are graduates of the New York State Training School for Delinquent Girls or similar institutions. And many House of Detention inmates to whom I've talked are in agreement with Joyce Krans, who says, "At Hudson (the girls' name for the Training School) I

learned a lot to help me in the life outside and also in the House of Detention. But I didn't learn it from the doctors and teachers and psychologists and all. You can bet I didn't learn from them and I didn't feel they were there to help me. Well, the ones I remember best are the doctors in the hospital where you stay when you first come to the school. They mostly looked like bulldykes, though there weren't too many gay nurses; that is, I found out later some of them were gay but they didn't wear bulldyke haircuts and you wouldn't know what they were to look at them. The dentist, Dr. Cullens, said I had terrible teeth and I must say she did try to do some dental work on me but she didn't do enough. My teeth weren't anything to write home about by the time I left Hudson either, but they were better; they *were* better but not much.

"And the psychologist, her I couldn't understand. She gave me blocks to play with and asked a lot of dumb questions that weren't her business. I only saw her one time, just while I was in Orientation Cottage was the only time, and really it was enough. I didn't want to see her any more. She said to come and see her if I wasn't happy but she really wasn't a friendly person so I didn't go and she didn't send for me. I didn't cry tears over it.

"I had my own social worker, Miss McCoffrey, and she'd send for me every month. She'd say, 'How are things going, Joyce?' I'd say, 'Fine.' They weren't fine, which is the truth, but you don't tell your social workers your troubles because all they can do is hurt you and you know they couldn't help you. Like even if they wanted to they couldn't—because who are they? The social workers . . .

well, let's say a bulldyke makes a pass at you, only the bulldykes're called 'pops' at Hudson—the social workers can't stop the pops from anything because the pops're too strong at Hudson and they got the social workers scared except the ones who're pops themselves. Now also, the thing is, if a pop finds out you talked about her to your social worker, God help you; you'll wish you were dead before she gets done.

"And that Academic Guidance and that Vocational Guidance. They talk to you a long time and you get all kinds of tests and whatnots but then hardly anybody gets to the classes you tell them you want to go. I wanted to go to the beauty parlor but they put me in the bakery instead and I wanted to learn to typewrite and instead of my going to a typing class, I'm in this Advanced Art which is . . . I told Academic Guidance. I said, 'I couldn't draw a straight line in my life.'

"What you learn most from in Hudson is the girls learning from each other and not the teachers and house mothers. The girls have classes in lushrolling and shoplifting and prostitutes teach the other girls all about that. So you know, when you come there, you figure you might as well learn from the girls and you might as well put your time in good.

"But, Jesus, you can't do that unless you belong to the racket, so that's what you always come back to when you talk about what's going on at Hudson—who's going with who in the racket and who's doing who. And if you're not in the racket at Hudson, you're like an outcast and that's the girls' name for you too—outcast. So it's the same way in Hudson as it is in the House of Detention. You've

got to be in the racket if you want to do your time good."

Joyce says she was "lucky although I didn't know it then when it happened" to have been solicited for the racket after she'd only been at Hudson a few days. It was two or three o'clock in the morning and she was asleep in her tiny room when she was wakened by what sounded like somebody trying to pick her lock. She thought she must be imagining the sound and tried to fall asleep again but was unable to because the sound of her lock being picked continued. She wanted to ask who was at the door but was too frightened and hoped that, if she stayed quiet, whoever was there might go away. But the scrounging sounds didn't stop until her lock was actually picked and the door of her room opened to admit a tall, fat girl.

"She was Jerry," Joyce says, "and, oh my God, talk about something mannish. She had some grip on her and muscles like rocks. I never seen a bulldyke in the House of Detention that was half as mannish as her."

Jerry was a leader in the Hudson racket because she was known, despite her youth, to be one of the best lushrollers in Harlem instead of just a promiscuous girl.

Joyce's desperate need for attention and, more important, her hopelessness over herself, her fatalism, were as apparent when we discussed her liaison with Jerry as when we talked about her promiscuity with the boys in her neighborhood club. She was drawn neither to the boys nor to Jerry but, since the boys and Jerry "wanted what I had to give—then why should I say no to them? I mean, what'd I have to lose?"

"And, at Hudson, I gained a lot because I was Jerry's mom. I mean, a big shot like her, it had to rub off on me. Also, I had somebody to protect me so I wouldn't be an outcast."

Thoughtfully, and seemingly almost against her will (she obviously didn't want me to think her vulnerable), Joyce added: "You know, there's something to a girl's making love to another girl which I certainly know since I started prostituting. A girl's tenderer with another girl than a man will be which is what I learned in Hudson, and then afterward.

"You know, in Hudson, the gay girls never had any trouble making the straight ones gay because, really, when a girl makes love to you, there's a little bit of a mother in it. And, you know, every girl needs a mother and especially in a place like Hudson. So the girls in Hudson made each other gay.

"I mean it had to be. You come to a place like that for the first time and even though it's nothing as awful as the House of D. you're still scared. Just the idea of being put away, of being locked up's enough. And there are little kids in the Home. Younger than I was when I went in—much younger than fourteen. There are girls of eleven and twelve in Hudson. They should have been with their mothers but a lot of them were orphans and that's why they went wrong. Nobody to care what they did. Some of the kids' mothers were whores and drunks. They never wanted them in the first place. They didn't give a damn for the kids. In fact, some of these poor little kids—their mothers had them arrested to get them out of the way.

After Joyce became Jerry's mom, she "learned a lot," as she repeated many times, about the illegiti-

mate trades some of the girls actually practiced on the outside and the majority fantasied about practicing someday. She learned the most practicable system for rolling lunches and the accepted technique for boosting merchandise out of department stores by rolling it up so small that it could be placed between the legs and nobody would suspect you were carrying anything.

And, of course, she learned all there was to know about the manner and method of prostitution in New York. The practicing prostitutes taught her and the other newcomers by utilizing the most effective of contemporary educational methods, possibly the only educational methods that have been proven effective with persons like Joyce: sample and example. Practically every night, Joyce and her friends in the cottage played the Hustlers' Game. One girl pretended to be either a street-walker or a bar girl. Another girl took the role of a plainclothes policeman. The hustler had to learn ways of spotting and avoiding plainclothes policemen. Joyce, to this day, maintains that she "learned almost everything I know about staying out of the coppers' way at Hudson. I learned that a girl should never talk price with a trick till she feels all over his body to make sure he isn't stashing a gun. Another thing is, if a trick says he's a workingman, feel his hands to see if they really are rough like a worker's ought to be. A lot of plainclothes bulls wear worker outfits and all. But when it comes to the hands, they forget. So their hands are nice and soft. Cops' hands and not workers!"

Joyce Krans believed, when she left the New York State Training School for Delinquent Girls, that she knew all the tricks of the hustling trade—

not merely how to avoid plainclothes policemen, but also about the special thrills and titillations for which men—and women—would pay higher than they would for "straight sex." She learned at the New York State Training School about men who wanted to be beaten and those who wanted to beat their girls. She learned about pimps who are prostitutes' lovers and panderers whom prostitutes pay to locate men for them. She learned about madams and shilling cabdrivers and bartenders. She learned about hotel-hustling and automobile-hustling—"car tricks won't pay so much as if a girl goes to a room with them. But then, they won't take so much of her time either. They're nervous of getting caught.

"With everything I learned about hustling at Hudson," she says, "I still wasn't going to be a prostitute anyway. I wanted to go straight.

"I was sixteen years old and I didn't do well in high school so the probation worker I had said I didn't have to go back to school at home and she would get me a job which she did do. I started working in a store, but I didn't make much money and I had to go home every night after work. And, well, you know, what was the use of working if I had to go to that house with my father drunk all the time now and everything?

"So I told my probation officer to please get me a job where I could eat and sleep there. I didn't care how much money they'd pay me just so I wouldn't have to go home which was like a jail to me then.

"My probation officer got me a job in a boys' school where I was an assistant cook which meant I had to prepare the vegetables and do other little

things like that. But, you know, because I was young and they knew I had a record and couldn't change my job like ordinary people, they took advantage of me and I did everything. I made beds and swept rooms and washed dishes till my hands got all chapped and red.

"And I couldn't get out of the place at night. I had a curfew because I was on probation. I had to be back in my room at eleven o'clock. And sometimes I didn't get done working till ten at night. So that also got to be like a jail—and so I thought to myself, well, I thought I did my term in Hudson. I thought I paid for everything I did, which, to tell the truth, I didn't do anything so bad I had to be sent to jail for it and then put on a job like this even a dog wouldn't stay on.

"So I called my probation worker up and, come to find out, she's on vacation. She won't be back for three weeks. I told the girl what was the matter and she said, 'Nobody can do a thing for you till your worker comes back from vacation.'

"That made me blow my stack, I don't know, and I packed my clothes and everything and walked out of the school without telling anybody or saying good-by. I just ran away is what I did."

She ran to the only people she expected she might get help from—"my friends from Hudson."

She went, on the night she left her job, to the shabby apartment on 129th Street in Harlem where her former lover, Jerry, lived.

"It's funny," she explains, "about the Black thing—Jerry's being Black and all. And later what happened with me and my man, Speedy—Speedy, of course, also being Black. In Pennsylvania we didn't know Black people and we thought terrible

things about them. There were a couple of Black people did the dirty jobs around town but, to us, they were like animals.

"Now in Hudson it was altogether different about being Black. In Hudson, the girls mostly looked up to the Black ones because they were good athletes and there were more of them and they were stronger. The Black girls were pops at Hudson. They were the bosses.

"Seeing Jerry in her apartment—it was like being back at Hudson again. There were four or five kids from Hudson there the night I came. One was a lushroller like Jerry and the others were prostitutes and addicts. We all sat around talking about everything we used to talk at Hudson—pills and morphine and now L.S.D. There was this one addict, Millie, who kept talking about how great pills are—Tuinals. She always talked that way in Hudson too. In Hudson, you know how she was, you'd sit by her, and just thinking about the pills she'd be half in the world and half out of it. Every time she saw her, she'd talk about how great she felt when she had drugs. You'd sit by her in Recreation, you'd think you were listening to a phonograph record. 'Christ, I'd do anything for a Tuinal. Oh my God, what I wouldn't give for a Tuinal. I'd let them cut my arm off if they'd give me a bottle full of Tuinals to ball with.'

"This Millie was the one who really got me interested in pills when I was at Hudson. She talked about Tuinals till they were coming out of my ears. And, you know, I'd never heard of them then. So I told her that I wondered what a Tuinal was and I asked her to tell me, 'What is a Tuinal?' And she answered me, she said, 'Well, it's a barbiturate,

you know, you get high. You like to get drunk and get high?" I said, "I only got drunk a couple of times. But, sure, I like to get drunk. It makes me feel good." Well, Millie said, "You want to know about Tuinals? Think of something'll make you feel a hundred times better than getting drunk. A hundred times."

"Well, sitting there in Jerry's apartment next to Millie, I remembered everything she told me about Tuinals and I reminded her. She had a few pills on her and she gave them to me to take and then Jerry gave me a couple of weeds to smoke—the which I had never done either in my whole life before. So I took pills and I smoked weed and I drank whiskey.

"Then, I'll tell you, it wasn't just Millie that got to me that first night at Jerry's. This prostitute, Louise, who really wasn't a good-looking girl except she did know how to make up, says to me, 'I make \$150 a day laying on my back. There's a lot of Johns around, a lot of tricks. So I go to bed and make \$150 a day. The way I look at it, it's no big thing going to bed.'

"I looked at that broad, Louise, and I used to be nice-looking in those days so I said to myself, 'A hundred and fifty dollars a day which is about as much as I make in a month working so hard in that crummy school. A hundred and fifty dollars is a lot of money to make in a day. I'm better-looking than Louise. I can probably make twice as much.' And pretty soon Louise dug what I was thinking and told me, 'Well, you can come out with me tomorrow and I'll show you how to get tricks.'

"And I was so high on the weed and the Tuinal and everything, I didn't even think to myself, well,

this making of money illegally is more ways of getting into trouble than I know already. More ways of getting arrested. Instead of that, I let Jerry and her friends make an impression on me, even more of an impression than when I was in Hudson. Well, I got so high in Jerry's house I fell asleep in her living room and slept there overnight.

"Then, I stayed high the next day and in the night I went with Louise on 125th Street. There weren't many white girls there, and everybody, all the tricks, wanted to go with me.

"I don't know how much money I made the first week at Jerry's because a lot went. Everything I made went for pills and weed, the which Jerry used to cop for me. I couldn't get along without pills after I got on them. Anyhow, I couldn't go out on the street or go with tricks unless I was hopped up."

During her second week in "the life," Joyce met Speedy Jackson, still today one of the wealthiest and most successful pimps in Harlem and, therefore, in all of New York. She still remembers her first sight of him, a large man in his mid-thirties with curly "good white" hair, wearing what's practically become his uniform and trademark—an off-green suit a little tight around the buttocks ("and why shouldn't it be tight? A man's got as much right to show his figure as a woman has"), and a pearl gray shirt and tie with a large diamond stickpin.

"Jerry introduced me to Speedy because he was a big shot who knew all the coppers and he could, you know, pay them in order to keep them from picking me up because I ran away from my probation. So that's what Speedy did. I don't know who

he paid off for me, but I had given him \$300 and he said I don't need to worry any more about getting picked up and Speedy was the kind—when he said, 'Worry,' you'd be smart to worry. And when he said, 'Don't worry,' you could relax over it.

"That's why all the girls wanted Speedy for their man and it didn't matter was he white or Black. That, and also, he could make you think he was in love with you. He really could. Like what he did before I came to live with him and be in his stable—you don't have to believe what I say when I tell you, he made me feel like he cared about me; like I was his sweetheart. He did.

"I didn't have anybody else and Speedy was nice to me and so, you know, I fell in love with him," Joyce says. "And I thought he cared about me and would marry me someday. So he said to give him my pay the which I said okay to because I believed he would save it to use to get him and me out of the life. He told me, 'We'll buy a little lingerie shop with the pay you give me and I put away.' Now, he had two other girls, Frenchy and Odessa, they also gave him their pay. But that wasn't no worry at all to me because he said, 'Look, lover, the more I get from them the better it is for you, because then we can get out of the racket quicker. The rat race.'

"So I worked as a call girl instead of on the street the way Louise showed me and I gave everything to Speedy. Well, if I made \$400 a night, I gave it to Speedy. But he showed me how to be a call girl and I made a lot more than I did shitkicking. Also, you don't get in so much trouble as a call girl. I was a call girl for two years—from when I was sixteen and three-quarters to nearly eighteen—and all that time I never spent a day in the

House of D. Because that's a good reason to be a call girl, you know—you'll never get into the House of D. unless you're walking the streets or going with men in cars or some other low thing like that.

"Because if you're a call girl, you're protected in every way. Like Speedy and the other pimps pay the coppers off not to arrest their call girls. And then, your customers—let's say a copper arrests you, after all, and you get in the court—you know, if you're on the street and get a trick, he'll tell on you, he'll say, 'Yes, Your Honor. She came up to me and she said, 'You want to have a good time, buddy?'" And I said, "How much?" And she said, "Twenty bucks." And I said, "What do I get for that?" And she said, "A straight or a Frenchy if you want it." Well, the tricks that go with a street girl don't want to hurt them when they testify against them. They don't want to see the girls put in jail. But, you know, the cops get them scared of their own hides. They say to the trick, 'I seen you with that whore, buddy, and I can get you in plenty of trouble.' Like some of the tricks don't know the whole truth which is that really they aren't guilty of any crime if they go with a prostitute. The cops got nothing on them. But even if they know it, the cops make them talk about you. They say, "I got nothing on you? Well, all right—but, hey, listen, how'd you like your wife to find out about this?" So, you know, say that your trick's even a nice guy—he's still going to tell on you after that.

"That's two reasons there aren't any call girls, only street girls, in the House of Detention—the cops who get paid off, and the call girls' tricks are

'smart. No cop's going to scare them. Like when I was a call girl I'm naked in bed with this trick when a copper shows. He starts asking my trick how much money he paid me or is going to pay me and the trick told him. I was an old friend and there wasn't no idea of money. So what could the cop do? He didn't take me to court because he couldn't win.

"And lawyers too. Because, you know, if you're a call girl you got smart lawyers on call. Take Speedy—he knows good lawyers. He got three lawyers I could call anytime if I got in trouble the which I didn't do as a call girl but if I would've they'd get me out fast.

"Well, now, you know, now that I'm shitkicking for my money, I take Legal Aid lawyers because they're free. And where I end up is the House of D."

Every prostitute in New York as well as every honest police officer, court worker, and Women's House of Detention employee can bear personal witness to the verity of Joyce's commentary about the law vs. rich and poor prostitutes. She exposes to view, as clearly as anyone could, some of the principal reasons why the House of Detention for Women is overfull of poor streetwalkers while a call girl is an oddity there.

"You want to know how I first got to the House of D.?" Joyce says. "Well, then I got to tell you how I stopped being a call girl and begun kicking the street which it was another call girl, Nancy, who's responsible. She was a new sister-in-law which is what we girls call our men's other women, the ones that also work for them. This sister-in-law

of mine was Nancy and she was another white girl. Now, Speedy, he didn't have any other white girls before, only me and then Nancy. And I was jealous and sort of, you know, bothered by her."

Nancy's white skin was not all that bothered Joyce about her. She was pretty besides and full of brass and swagger and wisecracks that kept Speedy in stitches. And from his behavior toward her, there was soon no question in anybody's mind, including Joyce's, but that Nancy had replaced Joyce as the "head chick" in Speedy's stable. Formerly, although Speedy was supposed to divide his free time equally among his women (equal time for all one's women is a vital part of the formally accepted pimps' code in Harlem), he actually spent more time with Joyce than he did with either Frenchy or Odessa who were Black and, therefore, not so much rivals as Nancy. In fact, although he spent agreed-upon days with Frenchy and Odessa, Speedy had invited Joyce and only Joyce to live in his apartment with him. By the time Nancy had come on the scene, Joyce had been more or less established as mistress of the spacious, gracious Sugar Hill apartment with its contemporary mustard, slate gray, and scarlet decor she adored because it was so different from anything she'd ever known before. And she'd been the one Speedy had generally taken to the Shandu and other after-hours clubs where pimps relax with their prostitutes after the women's working days are over. Since Nancy had come into his life, though, Speedy had taken Joyce there less and less often. And she was constantly hearing rumors of his having been there with Nancy.

One time, jealous beyond her ability to endure

it, she confronted him to his face. "Don't you care about me any more, Speedy?"

Speedy closed his eyes. "Mm."

"What does 'mm' mean?"

"Mm—mm."

"Speedy, you don't come to me—" She reached out and took hold of his fingers and pressed them.

He withdrew his fingers from her hand and opened his eyes slackly. He was tired, he said. He'd been at the Shandu last night and hadn't gotten to bed till six o'clock this morning. He closed his eyes again.

"Speedy, did you take Nancy to the Shandu?"

He didn't answer.

"Did you?"

He straightened up and adjusted his tie. He rose and she knew he intended to leave. Her control snapped suddenly and she began shouting at him.

Joyce, until today, is horrified by the crime she committed against Speedy. "Jeez," she says, "I called him a *nigger*."

Speedy cut the "squealers' mark" on Joyce's face, and she believes that she deserved it because she called him the name she did.

"Now Speedy was sorry he cut me after it was done because the mark made me ugly and I had to stop being a call girl even though I was still so young and although there are certain marks tricks don't mind girls having, my squealers' mark, the which I have to admit it, was so terrible, tricks didn't want me so much. So, you know, Speedy begun losing on me and he certainly wasn't crazy about me for that.

"And then—it was also about this time that I got to be a bad addict. You know, I chipped be-

fore this—as many pills as I was taking, I wasn't an addict before I got cut. But then, after, I wanted to be high all the time. The only time I felt good was when I got high. When I wasn't high, I was so depressed. So from pills I first turned to horse, I started using heroin and I needed so much every day, maybe forty or fifty dollars' worth. And what was the worst part of everything that was between me and Speedy was that I wasn't making enough money. So one day Speedy told me, he said to me, 'You're a lousy junkie, Joyce. You're not a chippy any more but are hooked and what is worse of all is you're not always bringing in enough money so it pays me to take a chance on getting busted and cop your drugs for you every day.'

"Now, the whole truth is that Nancy was also hooked, in fact, she was a bigger junkie than me. That girl couldn't even go with a trick unless she was loaded and she was on coke too, not just horse, and so, you know, her habit cost more than mine. It cost maybe \$100 a day and sometimes more. But, like they say, 'God gives to the child that's got his own.' Speedy didn't mind Nancy being such a junkie because she could make plenty of money anyways and, in fact, the more junk she had, the more tricks she would take. So, you know, Speedy copped for Nancy and never cared when she needed more, when her habit got bigger and bigger. It's the same way with junk like everything else. The *dinero* counts. If you got money, you'll never get sick and have to go to the House of D. as a junkie. It's only if you're poor you'll fall out on the street in the convulsion like I did a few times when they picked me up and threw me in the jail in the tank.

"So one night, after he talked to me about he

couldn't afford to support my habit after all the little money I paid him as a call girl, Speedy, all of a sudden, got so nice to me the way he used to be once upon a time when I made money. We sat in the living room and, you know, acted like we were like a man and his girl."

Joyce says Speedy came to sit beside her where she sat on the sofa and drew her close to him and his lips moved upon hers and the feel of it was so good. . . . There was no one but Speedy and the darkness and Joyce seeming to float on love and heroin.

As soon as he finished making love to her, however, and just before the shot of heroin she'd had wore off, Speedy became practical and told Joyce, adamantly and coolly, that if she wanted to continue "being his girl and also for him to cop my stuff for me, the which he was doing after all, that I would have to do, I would have to start kicking because I wasn't a good call girl any more now. He was still holding me close to him and looking like he cared for me when he told me I got to do that, to kick the streets like any dirty whore, if I wanted to stay with him and I just didn't see how I could do it then."

In spite of her fear of losing him, she pushed him away and shakily told him she'd never streetwalk for him.

He let her go and he looked at her out of the tough pimp's face she'd only now begun to learn. Didn't she love him enough? he asked in a surprised way. If she didn't there were other girls who did. He dug her, baby, but if he had to he could live without her or any chick—you know?

Joyce closed her eyes and tried to imagine life

without Speedy—and heroin. She started to tremble and tried to stop but couldn't. It was as though her whole body was in a convulsion of emotion, and she could not control its tensions. And when she looked at Speedy again, opened her eyes at him, it was to see the certain knowledge in his eyes. . . . He knew she'd do *anything* to hold him and to keep on getting her drugs.

"So I told him, 'Yes, I'll kick, I'll walk for you' —and, you know, that is the first step I took down to what I am now." And to the House of Detention for Women, she might have added.

Joyce's colleagues now were no longer the aristocrats of Speedy's stable but only two "middling-looking to homely if you know what I mean girls named Jean and Anne. Now, if those two were walking downtown, no tricks would have gone for them even if they were white. But the way it is in Harlem, Speedy had them and me on 125th Street because he knew what he was doing."

Speedy certainly knew what he was doing when he put his homeliest and humblest white prostitute, Joyce, to walking the Harlem streets rather than the midtown and downtown beats. Old in his business and shrewd in the ways of his world, he knew that many white men come to Harlem expecting a special something they do not understand themselves, hopeful of experiencing new erotica beyond the ken of downtown. They come to 125th Street, the hub of Harlem's prostitutes, these white men from higher places, sometimes brash, but more often timid, walking with heads down and fear on their faces. They come to Harlem, of course, in search of Black girls. But many times, once arrived, they find that, despite

themselves, something in them really prefers white, after all. Then they will jump at the chance to take the first white girl they see. She might be one they would never give a tumble to downtown, and if they do not want to pay for a hot-bed hotel, they will go into a hallway with her. And, such is the nature of the beast, being prepared for erotica, they persuade themselves they are finding it here and invest their plain or homely white girls like Joyce with some of the mystery Harlem itself holds for them.

And the police, quite naturally in view of the way all city establishments operate, make many arrests for prostitution, and particularly many arrests of white prostitutes who are the lowest of the Harlem as well as of all New York prostitutes, out of 125th Street. And the number of direct arrests, resulting from the questionable method whereby prostitutes are arrested for having solicited policemen in plain clothes (authorities agree that the policemen sometimes solicit the women), are greater in the Harlem area than in any other section of the city. Many prostitutes in Harlem are arrested under essentially the same circumstances as Joyce Krans describes her "first bust" to have been.

"I was on 125th Street with this sister-in-law of mine, Vera, at the place we worked every day when a white man about thirty-three or thirty-four, dressed in a torn, filthied-up tux like he'd been at a party and got drunk and maybe got in a fight with someone or whoopsed up on himself or something, came up to us and asked me and Vera to go to a hotel with him. Vera cooled him and kept looking at me, 'Feel this guy out before you go anyplace with him because he may be a vice cop, you know?'

But I was too dumb to get her message because the truth was that me, being a call girl before, how did I know the lousy ways the cops have got of getting you to come with them? I was too innocent, and, like a jerk, when the trick, the who I thought was a trick, stopped a cab and got in, I followed him right away and all I had on my mind was—how much can Vera and I take him for and how quick'll it be over?

"So I'm still happy and innocent up in the hotel room we went to when he asks how much for a straight and a French. I'm talking for me and Vera both and told him \$50 for the two, the which I knew it was a lot of money to expect and I thought, well, he'll jew me down. And, you know, when he didn't try to bargain I should have known he was a vice cop because the cops are the only ones who don't try to beat you down on your price. Real tricks always do because it's their own money, they're not about to give it up so fast. So he didn't bargain. He said, 'Fifty dollars okay and now you can both get your clothes off please.' And he, himself, began taking off his tux. Oh yes, he put the two twenties and a ten on the top of the bureau. Now, here are Vera and me in the nude when he pulls out his badge and the door opened up and there was his partner there and they arrested Vera and me and they brought us into Prostitutes' Court, Women's Court.

"Now Speedy did not even send a lawyer to court to take care of Vera and me. The which is not to say that the Legal Aid lawyer was not a nice little young girl that tried her best to get us off. I told her the truth about the cop asking me and

Vera to go with him and she also told it to the judge and she asked the cop questions but he lied and made it seem like we asked him so now the judge sentences us to the House of D. It's unfair. It's terrible for cops, who are supposed to protect you, to lie like that. And, you know yourself, they all do it. Every shitkicker in New York knows how the cops are. The girls in the House of D. always talk about the way the cops pick them up, the crummy tricks they use."

Admittedly, however, despite the entrapment tactics many plainclothes officers use for arresting prostitutes, there are not many women sentenced for prostitution who are not actually prostitutes. The fact is that, although the prostitutes did not, as the officers claimed, solicit them, they still went to strange rooms with strange men they believed to be customers. But what good does it do, either for them or society, to jail them? Certainly, if a policeman must solicit prostitutes in order to make arrests, they are not, at least at the time of the arrest, hurting anyone. We were legislating against them, therefore, not because we know them to be our enemies but rather because we are disapproving and even repelled by their morals. And our criminal law, based, in part as it is, on the moral law, holds prostitution to be a crime. But the question must present itself to thoughtful people who know the situation: should prostitution continue to be considered a crime?

Judge John M. Murtagh and I considered that question ten years ago when we wrote our book, *Cast the First Stone*, on prostitution in New York. We wrote then that "it is blind and stupid of us to

attempt, as we do, to legislate morality. Although the criminal law should be based upon the moral law, it surely does not follow that all moral offenses should be designated as crimes. The purpose of the criminal law is to maintain and safeguard the common good. Moral offenses, such as prostitution, that do not under most circumstances militate against the common good, should not be made part of the criminal law. The present law dealing with prostitution is an expression of detestation of such acts by the public. But such a motive is not sufficient reason for making them crimes, mortal sins though they are. Further, the existing law depends for its effectiveness upon a system of police espionage and entrapment, which is itself detrimental to the common good. When will we learn that morality is the business of the home, the school, and the church—but not of the state?"

Any consideration of the law as it affects prostitutes must also cope with the terrible unfairness of the differential treatment meted out to poor prostitutes and wealthy call girls. The difference in society's treatment of rich call girls, who are permitted to carry on their activities without intervention, and poor prostitutes, more particularly poor addicted prostitutes, insures the House of Detention of a never-ending clientele of women like Joyce Krans, who are committed and recommitted there, time after time, year after year, until they either die or move from New York and become habitués of other women's prisons. Statistics prove that very few ever acquire a new lease on life and "go straight."

Joyce Krans knows, as well as anyone, that she's one of those women "fated"—more because they

are the derelicts of prostitution than because they are prostitutes—to keep on passing through the House of Detention's revolving doors.

## 4

### You Pa Going To Be You God

Name—Bertha Green

Age—46

Education—Partial Elementary School. School Dropout

Marital Status—Single

Number of Times in the House of Detention—28

Bertha Green, even more than Joyce Krans, thinks of the House of Detention as a second home. Actually, it's more than a second home to her; it's a lin- eal home. Her daughter, Cora May, has been in and out almost as many times as she has, and her sixteen-year-old granddaughter, Cindy, is present- ly serving a three months' sentence for illegal pos- session of drugs. I first met Bertha, a big, fleshy, dark brown-skinned woman, and her daughter Cora May, who looks exactly like her except that

she's sixteen years her junior, in their grim bed-room-kitchenette apartment in Harlem. The walls of their room had been painted so many times they weren't of a definable color any more and the floor, warped and uncarpeted softwood, was cracked and full of lint and dust, balling together and rolling occasionally like living things. There was a double bed Bertha shared with her daughter and a small dresser with an electric one-burner plate on top, and near the foot of the bed, a rack of clothes which sagged like a scarecrow in a field and which she had made out of two-by-fours. The rack was empty, and when she saw me looking at it, she said that all her and her daughter's belongings were in the pasteboard suitcase which sat "packed so we can run out if we have got to do such as that."

Bertha's long record in the House of Detention for Women begins in 1938 when she was first arrested for prostitution and served a two months' sentence. In February of 1939 she served four months and in April of 1941 she served two months. In 1942 she was at the House of Detention twice. She was there three times in 1942. She had no trouble with the law in 1943, 1944, and 1945. In 1946 she was in the House of Detention twice and she was in three times in 1947. She served no sentence between 1948 and 1953. She was inside once each year during 1954, 1955, 1956, and 1957. In 1958 she served two sentences. In 1959 she was in three times and twice in 1960. She had no overt dealings with the law between 1960-63 but served two sentences in 1964 and had also been inside twice by the time I met her in May of 1965.

Bertha Green, her daughter Cora May, and granddaughter Cindy are, like most of the Black

inmates of the House of Detention (comprising well over 60 per cent of the total jail population), daughters and granddaughters of former sharecroppers, the poorest people in the South, who poured into New York during the Great Depression and the decade immediately following. They were told that marvelous opportunities for advancement existed in New York and that there was no "color problem" there. They were told that Blacks lived in houses with electricity, running water, and indoor toilets. They were told that the living would be easy in New York and that their children would go to the same schools and have the same possibilities of making decent lives for themselves as white children did. To them New York was the "promised land" where they and their children could, at long last, lay their burdens down.

And what they found were the dirty, uncared-for slum ghettos of Harlem and Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant and East New York and basically the same sunup to sundown working hours they'd known down South. They found that they were no better off in New York than they'd been in the South. And they found that in one important way they were worse off than they'd been because, now that they were already in what should have been the "promised land," they had no hope of deliverance any more. Their disappointment and bitterness and hate were colossal, and their children and grandchildren like Bertha and Cora May and Cindy inherited the sum total of their feelings.

The life stories of Bertha, Cora May, and Cindy Green which follow here are typical of the life stories of the Black women in the House of Detention who are the descendants of the once-hopeful

Southern sharecropper migrants, whose searching and dreams and endless battles to establish a place for themselves and their children in America's greatest metropolis—and in America—were doomed, from the beginning, to defeat.

Bertha, not yet fourteen when she first came to Harlem, was the only one in the family who went to school. She was frightened by everything in the huge building which was such a contrast to the one-room wooden schoolhouse in Georgia—finding her way around the corridors to the different classrooms, the complex rules and regulations, the white, elderly teachers and even the younger Black ones, the other boys and girls who “always yell or bust another one’s head in.” She says she didn’t understand what her teachers were talking about half the time. Neither did the other children who’d come up from the South. But the teachers had no time to explain or even find out what they didn’t know. With fifty and sixty in their classes, they had all they could do just keeping order.

Unsatisfying as they were, though, Bertha’s days in school were somewhat of a relief from the loneliness of life in the Harlem apartment. Her mother spent less and less time there as the months wore on. She left for work before seven in the morning and wasn’t generally done until eight or nine at night. Then she’d go off to some church meeting. She found her outlet in the church. At first, Bertha’s father tried to force her mother to keep the house as she used to keep it in Georgia. He’d insist that she prepare his meal when she came home from work and it didn’t matter to him how late it was or how tired she was.

“Ma come in the apartment,” Bertha says, “and

Pa say to cook his food for him and she say to cook his own because she was out working so hard all day long and he say he don’t give a goddamn how hard she been out working, when she get home she to remember she his wife and is supposed to fix his meals. And she say he never did act like a man and bring some money in the house so she don’t need to worry about acting like a woman and prepare his meals. And she right, you know....”

Bertha’s father would stalk out, slamming the door, after one of his arguments with her mother. And after a while he stopped arguing about her churchgoing and intensified his own outlets for life, even over what they’d been in Georgia. He began drinking more heavily than he had in Georgia (most of the women who migrated to New York with their families watched their fathers begin drinking heavily and often become alcoholics), and he continued his gambling and especially his “whoring.” Bertha’s mother said God only knew where he got his money from, but Bertha and her brothers and sisters all knew that the women he went to bed with “take care of him.” Bertha herself had once seen her father in a neighborhood bar with a “skinny old stringbean” who draped herself all over him and invited him to come to her room while she slipped a couple of bills into his pocket.

Bertha met her young man, Zachariah Smith, soon after her father left home. She was fifteen and dying of lonesomeness and Zachariah was “all I ever dream about in this world.” He was seventeen and “dicty-looking” and Bertha would have done anything he wanted. He was more casual about her, though. He’d come to see her a couple of times a week when nobody was home and she’d let him

make love to her. After a while, he grew tired of her and didn't come to the house any more, but by that time she was pregnant.

Bertha's mother noticed her condition before she could think of any excuses. Bertha says that her mother never blamed her for anything that happened. She blamed Zachariah. She said, over and over again, what she'd told Bertha since she could remember, that all men were naturally vicious and hurtful to women and "all men" now included not alone Bertha's father and her grandfather, who had left her Grandma Lawden so many years ago, but also Zachariah and any other man or boy who would be likely to cross Bertha's horizon.

Cora May was born in her grandmother's Harlem apartment, delivered by Bertha's mother and a "neighbor lady," Mrs. Jackson.

Bertha, like most of the Black prostitutes and addicts who had illegitimate babies when they were very young, did not feel disgraced because she'd had Cora May. She describes the attitude of the general lower-class Black community, South as well as North, when she says: "Plenty young girls have babies without marrying they lousy fathers and the families take them in and love them like my ma love my baby, my little Cora May. The grandmas glad to have them, too, you know, because most families on relief. And then the person on relief, he get pay for the number of mouths he feeding. And another baby is another mouth. So the babies' grandmothers take care of them, and they mothers, like me, go out working like I done."

Bertha applied to all the employment agencies likely to place colored domestics, and being eased out by more experienced girls, landed finally in the

Bronx slave market, well remembered by many inmates of the House of Detention who, before they became prostitutes, sought domestic work during the depression days.

Recalling the Bronx slave market, Bertha says, "The son of a bitch boss women, the motherens, look around at everybody and they feel you muscles to see how strong you be. Feel the arm muscles and the leg muscles. They feel around at everybody. And then if they decide you got more muscles and they want you instead of some other gal, they stand there and they smile at you and they say:

"How much you want, gal, to work for me today?"

"And what you say is, 'Unh, unh, unh, now, let's see.' And you start figuring how much is the most you can ask and still have her stay with you instead of going on to somebody else. And you have to ask it in such a way that they going to think you good-natured and all. Like you got to give them a big, crazy smile—they like you to show you teeth when you smile. You got to stand there holding out you arm with the muscle on it and smiling and saying, 'Take me, ma'am. Please take me because I am not only strong and cheap, but, also, I am a good worker and there ain't nothing I mind doing.' You stand smiling you big, fake smile and saying, 'You take me and I do everything you want. I wash you outside windows and scrub you floors with a brush and not a mop. You take me, you try me out and I be good for you, ma'am. You never have a girl work like me. You try me once. You try me one time and you want me all the time

because I be good for you, you know.' You got to talk all of the time and say things like that.

"Now, most of the time, the madams take me instead of the other gals in the lineup because I younger and stronger than them and I can afford to work cheaper. And I do it on account of Cora May. I want to buy her everything she need and all.

"But the other gals don't like me because I work so cheap and take they jobs away. And soon, you know, they start in to gang up on me. One time, before the madams come to pick among us, five girls surround me. 'We gonna do some head-breaking around here,' they say. And I know they mean my head. 'You make you muscles as big today as you done yesterday and you give the madams the line you gave them and you be in trouble, Bertha.' Everybody look at me and they look dangerous, I can tell you. They say to me, smiling, 'You ain't going to be one picked to work today, Bertha.'

"'I got to work!' I say. 'I got to because I got a little baby at home and nobody but me to look out for her.'

"'So you got a baby,' they say.

I say, 'Yeh.'

"They say, 'So what do you think we got? We got babies too.' And one of them, name of Loretta, been waiting in the lineup two, three weeks and no madam chosen her even one time. She so mad at me, she swaying on her feet and she got white spit in the corners of her mouth. She move toward me and start hitting. And all the gals come around me when I try to hit her back, they all around me in a circle, and they say to me, 'Don't you touch Loretta or we all going to take care of you, you know.'

So I don't hit Loretta back and she beat me up bad. I walk away from her crying.

There are other House of Detention repeaters like Bertha Green who claim that they first turned to prostitution for the reason that they were prevented from seeking out domestic jobs. And there are those who may or may not have shared Bertha's experiences with colleagues, but who certainly must have been treated, one way or another, as she says her madams treated her. They, like Bertha, say that of course they were overwhelmed by the small pay and the long hours and the hard work. But these alone might not have tipped the scales and made them turn to prostituting. The literal straw that broke their backs was the attitude their employers took toward them. Bertha, like the majority of the inmates of her generation, recalls—with more emotion than anything else elicits from her—the insults and snubs, conscious and unconscious, to which she was subjected.

Bertha says, "No trick, no matter how he dirty and hurt you, can treat you worse than some madams you housework for do. Many of them are what you call these nervous and excitable women. And lazy and are laying down on the job. And sometimes they stand around while you doing you work and make funny faces like they feel you can't be right in what you do. Or they sit there and watch you work, looking at you till you think you go crazy with feeling they hate you. And you can hear they voices going tch, tch, tch, as they watch you. They talking to you in voices that say they hate you and still not saying any words you can make out. Or sometime they talk to you but don't look at you. You ever see somebody lean back in they

chairs and rub they eyes and look out the window like they gonna talk to it? Then they do talk to the window. Like you ain't even around. They say to the window, 'This gal is just as lazy as all the rest of them people. They all the same. They lazy and liars and cheats.'

"And sometime, most of the time in fact, they act like I am a crook. Some of them only examine in my bag to see if I toting things. But a couple examine me all over like I am in court or in the House of D., and they one madam, she make me take off my dress and show her if I got anything hid underneath. And to shake out my shoes. And I got all shook up while shaking out my shoes and I say to myself, 'All the prostitutes I know ain't no worse off than I who try to do a honest job to take care of me and my baby.' So with everything, I just don't care. I mean what I remember about my first trick is I remember he pay me \$1.25 to go up on a roof and he a white man all dressed up in a blue suit and wearing a tie and if he ever tell a white woman to do what he tell me for \$1.25, she kill him. He tell me he going to be coming back to me if I walk the same place next week and to look out for him around five o'clock in the afternoon. And he tell me his name or leastways what he say was his name. It Mr. John Reach or Roach or Road or something like that.

"And I tell him all right, I look out for him next time and I do look and it don't make me no nevermind if he come or if he don't come. I mean, you get to a time after you know nothing's no good that you just don't care any more and you say to yourself: 'What the hell, why worry?' And then you just drift along, and you take your first trick-

and he make you feel dirty, sure, especially if he a white man. But then you got to think how all men is the same, no matter what they color. And how dirty it make you feel when some madam want to examine you underwear to see if you crooking her or something.

"So it the same way with me and my first trick as with me and the last one, I just finished with him three hours earlier. You just walk along the street thinking of all the hard in you life if you ain't shitkicking, all that you got to take from everyone, man and woman alike, and you know, the way things are when you still trying to make it square and honest, you think about that and you just don't care any more what you do or don't do with all the dirty men around."

Bertha Green speaks for all the prostitutes of her generation in the House of Detention when she compares the two realities, her life as a prostitute and her life as a domestic worker, and finds one as bitter as the other. It is hard to blame the women for having chosen the life they have, in view not alone of their circumstances but also of the lack of their preparation for coping with them. Certainly, the fact that there are not many more Bertha Greens than there are in the House of Detention is a miracle and a tribute to the moral strength of the vast majority of Black refugee women from the South who did not engage in prostitution or other illicit activities despite their abundant and destructive disillusionment with New York, the "promised land."

# 5

## And What Kind of a Lassie Would Yez Like, Bhoyo?

Name—Molly McGuire

Age—74

Education—None

Number of times in the House of Detention—44

Diminutive, dirty Molly McGuire, in a raggedy dress a couple of sizes too large and wearing an old-fashioned man's stovepipe hat incongruously fixed on her tangled gray-black hair, is representative of the lowliest inmates in the House of Detention for Women, the ones other inmates like Joyce Kranjewsi and Bertha Green look down upon. In a sense, Bertha is more derisive toward her than Joyce is.

Bertha says, "I sit there looking at Molly Mc-

Guire and I think of all them white women come feel me when I stand in the slave market and wait for work. And I see a Irish woman like Molly McGuire come and feel my muscle am I strong. I remember that day, and I think, well, Molly McGuire, you finally made it for all the Irish, you a Irish animal at last. You a complete Irish animal."

Molly, possessed of a fey Irish quality, once she's stopped being monosyllabic—as most Skid Row women usually are—is just as censorious of the other inmates, and especially of the Blacks, toward whom she has a particular hatred which stems from the days of her young girlhood in New York when she felt herself, as an Irish immigrant of the poorest class, to be in their category. She says, indiscriminately about all the inmates she's ever served time with, "Hassassin! Hassassins and murderers!" And adds about the Black inmates, "Black hassassins!"

Molly McGuire was born in County Mayo, Ireland, where she lived for the first eight years of her life in a two-room shack with her father, mother, grandmother, two older sisters tunefully called Noreen and Doreen, an elder brother named Michael, an emaciated cow originally designated Sean and nicknamed Slimy, a variety of pigs and chickens which bore no appellation, and a roistering, ruffianly dog named Bridie.

Molly says she'll never forget Bridie if she lives to be a hundred and ten. And no matter how long she lives, she will never forget the slender, yellowing poplars and the black-limbed twisted apple trees of her early youth or the sprigs of peppermint growing all over or the hungry Irish birds with their sharp, anxious twitterings. She will always re-

member the lustrous, late sun streaming into the grimy shack through broken-out window panes. She enjoyed life in spite of the hunger and cold and poverty, until the terrible night when she was seven and, wide awake, saw her father, Fluther, whom she'd always known to be a "bummer," return from a binge with two of his close friends—a roaring, hell-raising spree under the stars during which he and his companions quarreled and yelled most of the night. When at last he came into the house, he passed out with his feet in the fire. He awoke, shaking his bloodied head like a sick hound and in a bawling uproar. That night he became a permanent cripple.

And it was as a cripple that he gathered up his family one day just after Molly's eighth birthday, thumped his hand on the table and said, "We're going to the proper place, the only place, America."

What was America to Molly McGuire? First of all, it was stark, lonely Ellis Island that seemed as much of a jail in those days, perhaps more of a jail, than the House of Detention is today. Secondly, it was "the bloody ou' Sixth Ward," the Five Points Area, then and a long time earlier known as the most grisly neighborhood in the city, occupied mainly by descendants of Black slaves, Irish immigrant families like Molly's, and petty criminals whom Molly still designates by the names with which she first learned to identify them: "cats" or "gooks"—the small-time madams she presently meets in the House of Detention; "bats or owls"—streetwalkers who work at night; "griffs"—young thieves, and "gips"—old ones.

In New York Molly McGuire learned that she and all the Irish were despised by native Ameri-

cans. Songs like this one were sung all over New York in 1900 when Molly's family first arrived:

Bedam the Irish Catholics,  
Their customs, laws and language  
are not ours,  
Their bigotry sticks by them like  
their brogue.  
As full-blown sunflowers turn  
toward the sun,  
Their hearts turn to the  
Cross upon the church.  
Our young Republic will be  
ruled by Rome,  
While nunneries will be strung  
upon our streets  
As thick as beads upon a rosary,  
Unless we watch our native  
Country's weal  
With vigilance—a plant which  
blooms in votes,  
For shameless demagogues, on supple  
knees,  
Bow to the dust before the  
foreign power.

In New York, Molly McGuire learned that her father and most other Irishmen couldn't get proper jobs even if they were equipped to hold them. Irishmen, in Molly's early days in New York, occupied the same position Blacks and Puerto Ricans do today. They were the last hired and first fired. Indeed, the only jobs open to them, regardless of their abilities, were the lowly, menial jobs the natives would not have—bootblacking, hodcarrying,

longshoreman's work, chimney-sweeping—and, for the fortunate ones Tammany picked out to utilize for its own ends—saloonkeeping. And so, like it or not, they had to live in the grimy houses of the Five Points alleys and other such dishonored places.

The McGuires, when they first arrived in New York and during all the time that Molly continued to live with her family, survived mostly through the generosity of Tammany bigwigs who gave them food baskets and rent money every Saturday night. Their apartment, on Water Street, the grisliest street in Five Points, was a tiny, practically airless cellar room inadequately partitioned off from the larger cellar which contained fifteen bunks which were let out to both permanents and transients of either sex.

Molly, from the time she first arrived in New York at eight years old, lived more away from her home than in it. She seldom came home when she didn't have to. She remembers that, already at eight and nine, she could take care of herself better than her parents were able to do. She snatched her food where she could and she made her bed in out of the way places with one or another gang of vagrant children like herself. There were masses of them, all ages and sizes, who roamed the city, organized into bands that spent their days in pilfering and met at night to divide up the loot.

Molly says, recalling her early childhood in New York, that she was never devastated by it because she lived in hope of becoming a prostitute and earning money enough so she could eat decently and have a place to sleep. She "prayed to the good Gawd" for many years, and then, when she was

twelve, her prayers were answered and she was hired to work as a waitress-hostess in a combination restaurant-bagnio on Minetta Street in Greenwich Village that was called De Vito's Minetta House. She remembers the place as in a constant uproar, loud, clamorous, overpowering. She describes poor men, some Irish but mostly Italian, coming there and behaving like nabobs with her and the other girls, who ranged in age from eleven to sixteen. She remembers that the men came not only to sleep with the girls, but also to drink with them. She maintains that she and the rest consumed gallons of ale, porter, beer, and stronger stuff, in a front room of the house adjoining the restaurant—the only room not used for sleeping.

To hear Molly tell it now, she was not only waitress and prostitute but also an entertainer of note. There was a song she used to sing, an old Dublin street ballad, that made her the belle of the ball at De Vito's Minetta House. Interestingly, although the song is long and rather complex, she still remembers it all. In her high, cracked voice and banging a hand in accompaniment on the barroom table, she sings:

"It is true that the women are worse than the men  
Right fol right fol tiddy fol lay,  
It is true that the women are worse than the men,  
That they went down to hell and were thrown out  
again. . . ."

Molly says she was easily the most popular prostitute at De Vito's. She tells the story about an assistant of De Vito's, an Irish woman named Maggie O'Toole, who approached all the Irish customers

with the question, "And what kind of a lassie would yez like, bhoyo?"

Usually the young customer wouldn't know.

"A hussy with fancy stockings," she would ask, "or a sweet and tender little girl?"

Molly remembers that many customers maintained they liked both kinds, the hussies and the tender ones too. But some were discriminating. And for the ones who requested hussies, Molly could aptly play the role of a hussy, dressing in short, tight clothes and wearing "fancy stockings and pom-poms." And she was also a sweet and tender little girl for those who preferred sweet, tender girls.

Doubtless, Molly was not so distinguished and influential a figure at De Vito's as she claims to have been, if, indeed, she was ever there. If she is fantasizing her presence there, however, so are the greatest number of other old, vagrant women like her, who claim to have worked in houses of prostitution. In some ways their illusions—if they are illusions—are more indicative of them than the reality would be. For it becomes clear that, to this group of old women habitués of the House of Detention, the highest and most desirable life they could have aspired to in their young years was that of being a prostitute in a house. This typical ambition reveals, more clearly than any truth they can tell about themselves, how disastrously empty their lives were from the beginning. Unlike some of the Skid Row men who might possibly have started their lives with some faith in their futures, the old Skid Row women never had any hope beyond the one to which they still cling—to have a roof over their heads and not to have to go hungry or

scrounge for their food as they always have had to do. This is the basic reason why their prostitution fantasies include the security of working in a house of prostitution.

Molly left the De Vito house when she was sixteen, in 1908, and went to work in the Bowery Glad House, another combination restaurant and house of prostitution. It is likely that she was happy there because she says she was and also because her description of the Bowery in those, her years of wine and roses, is warm and loving. She talks about it as having been not a haven for the hopeless but rather a place of life and color.

But always, from the time she was sixteen and even while she felt herself at the height of her success, she lived in constant anxiety. She was sixteen. Soon she'd be seventeen. And eighteen. And how long would the Glad House want her once she was past eighteen? She recalls, and this may be the last recollection she expresses with vitality and sufficient logic so that fact follows orderly fact, a dreadful day after she'd had her eighteenth birthday when the owner and manager of the Glad House, a man known as Handsome Haggerty, called her and the other waitresses to question them about some "parties" they'd held beyond the ones they'd checked with him.

Molly, when Handsome questioned her, said she received only nine dollars although she'd taken ten in reality. Her reason was twofold—not so much to hold out a dollar as to protect Peggy Ann, whose seven dollars seemed less measly when compared to her nine dollars rather than ten.

But Nora, a selfish girl with no fellow feeling for

poor Peggy Ann, told Handsome about Molly. "Lies. It's lies she's telling you."

Molly bridled with bitterness then and called Nora "snotty." And Nora grabbed hold of Molly and hit at her and scratched her face and said, "You ould throllop, I'll paste the white face of yez because yez're too ould to go on working."

But Handsome came splendidly to her defense. He said, "It's nothing turrible being a ould lass of eighteen, Molly. Don't you torment yourself. Be the all-pitiful Gawd, no matter how ould you get to be, nineteen, twenty even, yez ain't going to get shoved out of no job so long as Handsome is here."

All the same, when she was twenty he told her she was too old to continue working, and her life as a vagrant began. For a while, she tried street-walking, but the competition was keen and there were younger girls soliciting. Besides, she had no confidence any more. So she went from bad to worse. From drinking in the good saloons and bars, she degenerated to the bad ones. She frequented them, as she does today when she can afford it, more for companionship than for drink. Not that she doesn't want and need to drink, of course. Anyone who'd been sold her first three pennies' worth of rum when she was a little over eight—by an entrepreneur who turned children into customers—would want to drink. But it is generally true, and was certainly true when she was younger, that she never minded commitment to jails or hospitals where liquor was unavailable to her so long as she was surrounded by people and had enough to eat.

Molly McGuire and the other elderly vagrant

women in the House of Detention are as much the victims of our prejudice as the large mass of Black and Puerto Rican House of Detention inmates are. They are living examples out of history that our inhumanity toward minorities can help drive any people, not Puerto Ricans and Blacks alone, to the revolving door of the Women's House of Detention. Just as Cindy Green is a symbol of New York's—and America's—present shame, Molly McGuire is a symbol of the shame of our past. For it is a fact that, while Blacks and Puerto Ricans comprise the majority of today's inmates of the Women's House and of every county jail, male and female, in the country, Irish and Italian immigrants were in the majority before 1912. Between 1845, when the New York City Police Department was first created—primarily as a means of coping with Bowery derelicts—and 1855, the number of drunk arrests, mostly of Irish men and women, was 100,000. By the 1870's, the number exceeded 40,000 Irish derelicts a year, and one out of every three arrested was a woman. Irish children as young as eleven years old were arrested in the 1870's. No question about it, Cindy Green and Molly McGuire are more sisters under the skin than they—and most of the rest of us—suspect.

Many of the flophouses a Reverend Dr. Parkhurst toured in 1892 are still standing today. And the derelicts, aside from the fact that they are, mostly, of a different race and nationality, are also still the same. The Bowery still belches despair, and Bowery vagrants, whether they are thirty-five like Black "fleabag" Dinah Lincoln or as old as Molly, and whether they've been living there for five months, five years, or the fifty-four years

Molly has, all consider it to be "the last step before the grave." And they say they don't care that they're going to die in such a morbid place. They've all washed their hands of themselves so they're beyond caring about what happens to them.

The most irredeemable among the Bowery women who go in and out of the House of Detention—certainly as irredeemable in their essence as Molly McGuire—are paradoxically the young and able-bodied women. Most of them, unlike Molly, don't believe in God, and they hate people, all people. They are far more contemptuous of themselves than Molly, with her happy recollections of popularity at DeVito's Minetta House. In addition, they believe, as Molly also does, that they are on Skid Row because they deserve to be. They are dyed-in-the-wool fatalists. Also like Molly, they're not angry and they don't whine because they're on the Bowery. They merely go on existing day after hopeless day with the feeling that what's bound to happen to them will happen.

Thirty-seven-year-old Mary Haywood, a big black-skinned woman with a strong stocky body, is like that, although you'd never expect her to be from looking at her. Once I asked her if there was some place I could contact her if I wanted to reach her by appointment. She spread her beefy hands out so that they covered the table for two in the Bowery Bloody Bucket where we sat, and she talked to me while she watched her fingers move on the table.

"Yes," she said, "sure, the Sunshine Flop. Guess I'll stick around there till I run out of money. I got six dollars."

I asked, "Where'll you go when you do run out?"  
She shrugged her shoulders.

I said, "It's November, Mary. It's cold and is going to get colder, and if you don't have money for another flop and you won't go to the Hallelujah Boys, what will you do?"

She shrugged again.

I said, "You just can't sleep outdoors."

"Maybe I won't need to," she said.

I said, "But maybe you will. Doesn't it worry you?"

"Worry?" she asked as though the word had never existed in her vocabulary. "What good'll that do?"

"But, Mary," I said, "don't you believe that you have anything to do with the way you live? For instance, don't you believe you ought to do something to prevent your having to sleep outdoors in the winter?"

"Me?" she asked.

Since that was the only answer she'd give me, I began probing her about the whys and wherefores of her life and personality. I tried to find out exactly when this feeling that she had no responsibility for her own life had first begun in her. She tried to tell me but couldn't.

She kept shaking her head over and over again. "Look, I don't know, I just don't know, that's all." Still, she kept on trying with me and answered my specific questions as well as she was able. "Pa? He was okay, I guess, but I never saw him around much. What do you mean, loved him? He was my pa, wasn't he? My ma? She was okay too. What do you mean, what'd she do for me? Hell, sure, she told me what was right and wrong. When there was

food in the house, she always give me some. Yeah, she was good like that. Yeah, I got three sisters. No, no brothers. My sisters, yeah, they was okay too, I guess. What are they doing now? Well, I wouldn't know about that. Still alive? Yeah, I guess. I don't really know if they're still alive. Yeah, sure we lost touch. Them do something for me? Well, Jesus Christ, I don't expect nothing like that."

I went on questioning Mary Haywood, trying to find out when she first lost her faith in people. I asked her whether she remembered ever having expected anyone to do anything for her, and she said no.

Since Mary had not come on to the Bowery until ten years ago when she was twenty-seven, I asked her whether she'd ever had any boy friends.

"A couple."

I asked whether her boy friends had liked her and she said she'd never thought very much about whether they had or not.

"Did they say they liked you?"

"Sure," she said, "but I never believed them."

"Why would they say they liked you if they didn't, Mary?"

"I don't know why." Then, thinking for a while, she added, "I had jobs in those days. Maybe that's the reason."

I said, "Did you ever look in the mirror, Mary? You're not a bad-looking woman, you know."

She said, "I'm a slob."

I said, "Sure, your clothes are dirty and I don't know when you last put a brush through your hair. But you'd be surprised at how attractive you'd be if you cleaned yourself up. Why don't you?"

At first she said she thought she would but I told her I didn't think so and then she admitted that she didn't think she would either and we talked for hours about why she wouldn't. Only two ideas came out of our talk. She was really nobody so why should she pretend to be somebody, and even if she did pretend, who was going to believe her anyway?

I heard the same questions from every House of Detention inmate off the Bowery regardless of their age, race, or length of stay on Skid Row. Who cares about me? What do I matter in the world? And the same unvarying answers based on the fact that these women are what their environment has made of them—suspicious, with no faith in God or people, and, above all, with no feeling of self-dignity. That is why they go through their miserable days with the idea that they have no control whatever over their own lives.

Unlike the men, the majority of women on the Bowery often actively seek arrest and commitment to the Women's House of Detention. To them, the commitment means more than merely some days or weeks of indoor eating and sleeping. It is, in a sense, their little triumph, the only one they've ever had in their lives, over a society that would, if it could, keep them cold and hungry.

There is no question but that the Bowery inmates are not aided by their incarceration. But then, neither can they be aided by even the most elaborate health and welfare programs planned around the needs of true alcoholics. If there is any salvation for them in this world, it will only be attained after we've thrown off our long-standing misconceptions and directed ourselves to ferreting

out the true people behind the masks worn by the Molly McGuires.

Any program we undertake must be built around the needs of women without egos, who are on the Bowery and in the House of Detention for that reason and no other, rather than the needs of true addictive alcoholics, whose problems do not even remotely resemble theirs.

# 6

## Oh, What a Nice Man Is Willie Bly

Name—Louise Johnson

Age—30

Education—Graduate of a Junior College  
Times in the House of Detention—1

If Molly McGuire is among the lowliest of the inmates, then Louise, whom I first met ten years ago when she was twenty is one among perhaps four or five hundred top-drawer call girls who, as she says in all truth and sincerity, "cater only to millionaire and multimillionaire businessmen sent to us by some of the largest business corporations, famous, famous companies," may be one of the loftiest women ever to have passed through the House of Detention doors.

"Well," she says, "I was sent to that place and it was incredible. Absolutely. I don't mean the jail alone was incredible, although God knows it was. I

mean, the fact that I'd been sent there at all was unbelievable to me. I mean, literally, I'm the only call girl who's hit that place since God knows when."

It is as difficult to visualize Louise Johnson as a call girl as it is to envision her among the regular inmates of the Women's House of Detention. She's a small, slender woman with dark hair hanging in waves to her shoulders, and her face is pale, calm, and singularly beautiful, like that of a wax madonna. She is soft-spoken and is always smartly but unostentatiously dressed. She would appear, off-hand, to be every man's ideal of the perfect wife.

"How did I get into the business?" she asks with a small smile. "I guess you could say I got into it suddenly rather than gradually as some girls do or maybe it was gradual, after all. Maybe I'd been preparing all my life to become what I am today.

"No, seriously, when I came to New York eleven years ago, I came to try to get into the theater. I was twenty and ambitious as hell. Well, by the time I was twenty-one and had made the rounds of every agency in town a dozen times, my ambition had taken a bit of a beating, if you know what I mean. I was licked and conceding it to myself, although I was still writing happy missives to my grandparents back home. They all went somewhat like this:

Dear Grandma and Grandpa:

I hate to ask you for more money after all you've sent me this past year, but I do believe I'll be paying you back soon—with interest, my darlings. Believe it or not your grand-daughter is on the very verge of the biggest break of her life.

I am to try out for Joshua Logan. Do you know who he is? Only *the greatest*, that's all. The greatest in town—producer of *South Pacific* among other hits. And he asked to meet me. Can you imagine it? There I was, sitting at Sardi's with George Meredith—he's that handsome young Hollywood star I wrote you about in my last letter and he's been taking me just everywhere and loading me down with flowers and candy—well, anyway, there are George and I sitting at Sardi's and I'm gasping at all the big stars when in comes this *character*. I mean he's nothing at all like the pictures in the newspapers, and he comes over to our table and says:

"Who's the beauty, George Meredith?"

Well, even George, for all his Hollywood poise, was taken aback. I mean, after all, Joshua Logan, Gram, so George took a little while to gain his breath back before he made the introduction.

"Mr. Logan—Miss Johnson."

I'm afraid I showed my hickiness. I said, "Not the Mr. Logan. Not Joshua Logan."

"The very same," he said with a big smile. And *then*, then he asked me to come and read for him. He said I was exactly the type he wanted for an ingenue *lead* in a new play. A *lead*. Well, of course, I haven't been eating or sleeping since I met him. Darlings, I'll let you know just as soon as anything happens.

"Well, three months after I wrote that letter I went to read for an ingenue lead—only I read for Morrie Bober, a call-girl placement man, and not Joshua Logan. My agent, Tom Dickson, intro-

duced me to Morrie. He said I had to eat, didn't I?—and if Morrie took me on, I'd be sure of three squares a day and enough money over to keep paying on my dramatic lessons. He said that Morrie, who got call girls ("And you needn't look so offended either," he said. "Plenty of good actresses do jobs for Morrie.") for big business firms, would have plenty of jobs for me if he liked me.

"Morrie Bober seemed awful the first time—so crude and cutting. Not unkind, because he was unconscious of how hurtful he was, but terribly crude. He examined me like I was a horse or a cow, and then he said he thought I'd pass. He said he'd send me on this tough assignment for—. He said he always sent actresses on the tough ones, rather than models or ordinary whores. He said: 'This party will pay you one hundred smackeroos, kid. Do a good job and I'll double your payment your next time out. Now this guy, Scheuer, I want you to handle—he's big stuff for the company, see, real big. But he's sort of innocent. I don't think he's ever been out with a whore before. Well, don't tell him you're one. Make believe you're just an actress on the town—and he's knocking you dead. You'll be sitting at this table with Robert Gowan,—'s public relations director, and somebody'll bring Scheuer in. Gowan'll ask him to sit down, and from there on in the play is yours.' "

Louise says that, no matter how long she lives, she won't forget the smallest incident of her first date as a call girl, neither her client nor her colleagues.

"So here I was," she says, "sitting with Robert Gowan and shivering in my shoes while awaiting my 'fate.' Oh yes, Robert Gowan, thank God for

that and other small favors, was the exact opposite of Morrie Bober, a sweet guy if ever you saw one, and good-looking, *sweet-looking*—a nice, decent man. He and I were sitting in this elegant restaurant—often uses for its more intimate dinners—you know, *intimate*, tables far apart, candlelight, all that sort of thing—when some other public relations man named Johnny something-or-other came in with this big prospect, Scheuer, and it looked like they had just happened in. Robert Gowan acted surprised, like he hadn't expected to see either Scheuer or Johnny, and he grabbed the two of them and made them sit down with us.

"'Well, what do you know,' he said with a grin, "it's a small world, isn't it? Seems like, no matter where I go to hide out, I still run into people from the "place." Not that I'm not happy to see you, Mr. Scheuer. In fact, I was going to call you tomorrow . . . find out if you wanted to go to the theater or something while you were in town. Speaking of theater, this little girl's in it, you know.'

"I could tell old Scheuer was excited by the mention of my being in the theater. He was a kind of lusterless fellow at first glance. You know the type: sandy-haired, sandy-skinned, about fifty years old, holding himself as stiff as a ramrod and looking like he couldn't let down for anything. But he did loosen up a little bit when Robert Gowan said I was an actress. His dead blue eyes came alive somewhat and he laughed.

"Somehow, as I looked at him, I had an instinct. I said to myself, he's a sharp operator. I sized him up as . . . well, careful. You would have, too, if you had seen him examining the menu as though it were a bank statement. He read it line by line and

then he read it again, and when the waiter came back to take his order he still had not made up his mind.

"Perhaps you could recommend a dish. What is the specialty of the house?" He gave the waiter a thin smile.

"Tonight's specialty, sir, is broiled scampi."

"What's it like? Describe it."

"The waiter did. The description did not suit our Mr. Scheuer, however. He asked all kinds of specific questions about how the scampi was prepared. Of course, in the end he didn't order the scampi, but asked about more dishes. He sat in deep thought while the waiter answered all his foolish questions as patiently as he could. I sat at the table and watched Scheuer with the waiter, and I felt so terrible that he had to endure all that nonsense. I did, too, of course. But at least I had the comfort of knowing I'd be well paid at the end of that miserable evening. Those foolish, foolish questions. Well, next thing Scheuer progressed from questioning the waiter to being nasty and abusive to him. I wanted to hit him and it took a great effort to me to control myself."

Louise's sympathy with the waiter, shared by most call girls I know, is, I think, indicative of something that may be important about them—an identification with underdogs, not alone waiters but also servants, Blacks, and salesclerks, who they believe are constantly put upon by customers. And the identification is no casual thing but rather unimaginably deep and profound. Louise, for instance, was stimulated by Mr. Scheuer's impoliteness to the waiter to such a point that she says, "I felt—the way I felt—I couldn't help but feel a sort of a

depression crawling over me. This was the first time I felt depressed on a call—naturally, since it was my first call—but the same depression has happened to me many times since. It comes on when I take a positive dislike to a client. I get heavy-hearted and exhausted and begin reliving in my mind the worst days of my life. And I start thinking I'll commit suicide. That's what I kept thinking all the time I laughed and kidded with Scheuer: How would it be if I walked away from this table right now and got into the path of a car? Or if I drank chloroform or swallowed three bottles of aspirin or went up to a twentieth floor some place and jumped out of a window.

"Well, finally, believe it or not, dear Mr. Scheuer made up his mind about what to order—lamb chops rare. Wouldn't you know that after all our effort, he didn't eat much. The meal was a bust and I could see Robert Gowan worrying over every bit of chop that didn't get masticated and swallowed. He needn't have been so concerned, however, because Scheuer made up for his lack of appetite by the way he drank. He was like a sieve. He poured scotch down like water and topped things off with champagne. The bubbles released his tongue, too. The shy man, whom we had to handle with kid gloves, lost all his inhibitions and, while struggling with a mouthful of food, said to me:

"Say, girlie, here is something I always wanted to know and never thought I'd be getting to ask an expert who is in the business herself: Are all actresses whores?"

"I put on the most modest look I could muster and said, 'Oh, no, indeed, I should say not. I know that is the reputation we actresses have, but many

of us don't live up to it at all. In fact, you will find more prudes among actresses than among secretaries.'

"Old Scheuer's face had been expressionless all the time I was talking, but I knew that he had been intent all the same. Now he buttered a slice of bread and asked:

"What makes you say that?"

"Oh," I said, "I know it."

"He smiled. 'I don't think so.'

"I smiled too. 'Each man to his own opinion.'

"And that is your opinion, is it? You don't think actresses can be bought? You don't think they have their price, just like any other woman?"

"Do you think all women have a price?" I asked in return.

"Yes. Take you, now. You can be bought. You're not too expensive either."

"His hand was on my knee, caressing me and moving upward. I felt nauseous and I thought, you son of a bitch. But I said:

"I think you've got me wrong. I cannot be bought. That's always been one of my troubles in life. That's why I haven't gotten farther than I have." I spoke softly, as though he and I were alone.

"He leaned back and lighted a fat black cigar. The smoke hung in the air. I've always found cigar smells intolerable, but, knowing my duty, I said:

"Oh, that cigar smells so good to me."

"Whereupon the charming fellow blew his smoke right into my face. I had a feeling he knew very well I hated the smell of cigars and was trying to torture me. Actually, I turned out to be more right than I knew then. Since I have been on so many

business calls I have learned really to read the men I've got to go with. They are mostly alike in their dealings with women like me—deliberately mean and callous. I guess we bring out the sadism in them. But then who cares about that? If they didn't act as they do, maybe they wouldn't sign on the dotted line the way they do, and then where would we be?"

"Scheuer's hand kept moving on my leg. I couldn't help but think how it would be to be a free woman instead of paid for and delivered. What would I do if I were free? Well, I might have sprung up from my chair and slapped his face. But, instead, I pretended I liked what he was doing.

"As he caressed me, he talked in a booming voice about "Little old New York, a great city, the greatest little old city in the world."

"Robert Gowan was delighted at Scheuer's joviality and responded to it in kind. 'You, my friend, have not really seen New York yet. I mean by that the kind of New York this little girl and I can show you. It isn't every day, after all, that we get to entertain men of your spirit. Let's all go on the town tonight.'

"Wouldn't you know old Scheuer would play hard to get?"

"I don't know. I am not in the mood."

Robert Gowan, ignoring the coolness that only indicated Mr. Scheuer was "playing hard to get" and would be quite unwilling to settle for the ordinary pleasures of New York, took him, as public relations men almost invariably take such difficult clients, to a titillating night club in Harlem. Commenting on this stage of her evening with him, Louise says:

"Mr. Scheuer was really funny when we got to this Harlem joint. It was dark and cave-like there—a marvelous atmosphere cooked up to make Casper Milquetoasts feel like big brave explorers. Scheuer was so impressed he lost his tongue for a while. Finally, though, he regained it and came out with a remark about as original as anything he had said that evening.

"This is some place."

"Oh, yeah," Bob Gowan answered. "And wait'll you see the show. That'll really be something. There's a girl in it, Queenie McKay, who's the greatest, most fabulous—Well, wait, you'll see for yourself."

"He did. He saw Queenie, and I saw him. I watched him like a hawk. I saw a red spot appear on his forehead as our girl began to strip. And then I watched the red trickling down his face and on to his neck until he looked on fire.

"I was very pleased as I watched him, because something told me (bright, aren't I?) that he'd rather go to bed with her than me.

"I couldn't take my eyes off Mr. Scheuer, just as he couldn't take his off Queenie.

"Say," Robert Gowan said, "I take it you wouldn't mind being introduced to Queenie, Mr. Scheuer."

"Oh, I wouldn't. I wouldn't." Old Scheuer's face was full of naked, middle-aged longing. I got sick at the sight. It was embarrassing to sit by and watch him letting himself go the way he did. I couldn't help but wonder what Mama Scheuer would do if she could see her hubby now. Probably refuse to believe her eyes.

"Bob Gowan, also watching Scheuer, told him

that I could introduce him to Queenie, that she and I were close friends.

"Not close friends," I said, while holding my tongue in my cheek, "best friends. We went to dramatic school together."

"I know now, since I've gotten to know her, that the closest Queenie had come to anything like dramatic school was when she was in sixth grade and met a stripper, a lesbian known as Mademoiselle Bidet, who told her: 'For ze leetle kees, my darling, I will teach you all zat you need to know about using zis wonderful bodee.'

"I found Queenie in the dressing room backstage of the club. And, honestly, she was breathtaking, even more beautiful close up than on the stage. She was a sort of cafe-au-lait color, the color every white brunette would love to tan to. Her eyes were huge, even larger without the stagey make-up she'd worn for her performance, and she had the longest, blackest, most satin-smooth hair I'd ever seen in my life.

"Queenie knew all about me, of course. She'd evidently also been well instructed. While I waited for her to dress, I told her what a fire she'd wakened in Scheuer's breast and admitted the little jokes I'd had with him on her account. She just laughed and said she'd gleaned his type from examining him while she was dancing. 'Sure, he wants to go to bed with me,' she said, 'but, you know, he wouldn't want to be seen with me outside of the bedroom. He reminds me of a funny story I think about every time I forget who I am when some white daddy-o offers to lay a lot of money and expensive presents on me.'

"Queenie's story concerned two Southern busi-

ness men in New York for a fling. They settled in at the most swank hotel in town and the first thing they did, naturally, was to ask the bellboy to send up a couple of women. Soon, the doorbell rang and one of the businessmen went to answer the door. He returned, looking highly perturbed.

"Well," he told his friend, "the girls are here and they're stunning, and, I swear, I don't know what to do."

"The girls are here and they're stunning and you don't know what to do? Are you out of your mind? Go on out and get them in here, brother."

"But," he stammered out, "they're colored."

The friend, considering and reconsidering the dilemma, finally said, "Get them in here anyhow. We don't have to go to school with them, for Christ's sake."

"Queenie's story broke whatever ice was between us and I knew I was going to like her. I also knew we'd have a lot in common in spite of the fact that I'd gone to junior college and she'd never gone beyond fifth grade in school and that she'd come up the hard way in Harlem while I'd lived surrounded by wealth and that I was white and she was Black. It warmed me all over to think I might have found a friend."

Nobody who doesn't know the confined life a call girl must lead, her lack of friendships among her own sex as well as with men, can know the overwhelming importance of "finding a friend" to someone like Louise. Her hours of work, from three o'clock P.M. until early in the morning, preclude any possibility of forming friendships with women who lead more conventional lives. Also, more importantly, call girls' lives and interests are so many

miles apart from those of ordinary career women, wives, and mothers that, even if there were not the question of divergent moralities, friendship between them would still be impossible. And so, as Louise knew intuitively now, and would learn from bitter experience after she grew more accustomed to "the life," she would have to cling to other call girls like Queenie, who would also cling to her, in spite of whatever differences existed between them.

"So," Louise says, "I told Queenie that, now that I'd found her, the rest of the night, what there was left of it, seemed somehow to be a little more bearable to me."

"I guess it must have been four or five in the morning—light was just beginning to dawn—when the five of us, Queenie, Bob Gowan, Scheuer, Johnny, this other P.R. man I told you about, the one who had come along with Scheuer, and I wound up in this hotel. We had a suite—foyer, living room, and twin bedroom. The party began in the living room, of course. That living room was quite a place. It was deep, deep green and startling red (the passion colors), a large room with a glass wall overlooking the river. I have often been in that room since this first time I'm talking about. You know something? It is really beautiful, and yet I hate it because it makes me think of dying. I look out of that huge window and I see the river and it looks so tempting, I think, what would it be like to jump? And to drown. How good it would be to be sucked in by water! Then I'd be away once and for all from these men, these tricks who come to me like a pride of lions, stalking together and sharing

the kill. God, but it's a filthy business, this business of sex."

That Louise should have contemplated suicide twice in the same evening can hardly be a surprise to anyone who knows call girls. I remember that of twenty-five call girls I interviewed in depth for Judge John Murtagh's and my book, *Cast the First Stone*, twenty-four said they had contemplated suicide at several points in their lives, twenty-one said that, like Louise, they were constantly obsessed with the thought of killing themselves, and twelve admitted that they had tried to take their lives. All of them had friends and acquaintances among call girls who had succeeded in killing themselves. Actually, for many reasons, including their greater guilt because they are flaunting their middle-class and upper-middle-class values with every breath they draw, many more call girls than lower-level prostitutes are would-be, potential, and even actual suicides.

"Well, marvelous little cowardly me," Louise says, "I didn't jump out of the window, but instead, turned on the radio so Queenie and I could dance. We each took turns with all of the men. The kind of dancing we did was, of course, calculated to further excite Scheuer—as though he needed that. Don't you know the dancing I'm talking about? Doing it always gives me a sour taste in my mouth. Funny girl for a whore, aren't I? And yet I'm the same as I was then, until today. You know, I can take the actual sexual experience my customers demand because I'm inured to it, closed up, detached. But the preliminaries, the techniques I must use to make a man want me, drive me crazy. I never let on about the way I feel, though. Hell,

what whore can afford to do that? When I'm at a business party, I act animated, gay as a chipmunk—and it knocks me out. That's because I'm always fighting inside.

"Queenie doesn't seem to have to fight. There's iron in that girl. Take that night with Scheuer. When she danced with him she moved every muscle just the way she does in her act. She had him wild, I can tell you. His breath came short and his eyes grew glazed. His face became redder than it had been at the club when he'd watched Queenie strip. Now it was quivering besides. And he undulated his body along with Queenie's. His thighs clung to hers.

"Suddenly, Queenie stopped dancing. 'Charlie?' She'd learned his first name, which was a lot more than I had done.

"What?" He could hardly speak.

"You know, that girl's technique is something. Her eyes were bright and loving and her voice was soft and she sounded as though she meant it when she told him, 'Kiss me.' Her hands reached for his face, pulling it down, and I noticed her bite his lip lightly as she kissed him. Of course, he practically dragged her into the bedroom then.

"The morning after the big party, Queenie and I met Bober and received our pay. She got three hundred plus an extra hundred for being a 'good girl,' and I got one hundred twenty-five. A couple of days later Morrie called us in again and said he and—wanted to reward us further for the job we had done. Seems our beloved Scheuer had signed a large contract and was full of goodwill toward—. So everyone who had been connected with the deal was given a bonus. One thing I've got to say for—,

it's not cheap like some other companies I've worked for. When you help—pull off something big, it'll give you a break too. 'Sharing the profits, Morrie calls it.

"But don't misunderstand me, please.—has its own way of taking its generosity out on a girl's hide. I think some of the most sickening and sordid parties I ever attended were run by that firm. Why, the party with Scheuer was a kindergarten affair compared with plenty of other deals I've worked. At least the Scheuer deal was thrown for one guy. Bad as it was, it still was not a group party. Those group parties, they're the ones that knock you out. You know how it is yourself. A man alone never dares to be as coarse and offensive as he is when he's with the gang. Being with other men while with girls brings out the worst in men, the buried animal. They begin to perform like trained seals or something. They'll ask you to do abnormal things, not because they like them themselves, but because they think the other boys expect them to. It's at group parties that I get most resentful. I actually get sick. My head begins pounding and I get dizzy.

"Honestly, I can hardly bring myself to describe some of those so-called parties. Well, all right, I'll tell you about the last one I was on. It took place in one of the top New York hotels, and the manager (you'd die if you knew his name) was involved in it. The hotel was in on everything that happened. I know that because Queenie and I received our two hundred dollars—we each got two hundred from that one—from the desk clerk. He handed us our envelope with the money in it, as bold as you please, at exactly the same time as he had the boy

show us up to our suite. That suite was a living room and a twin bedroom too. But the living room was not as large as the one we had entertained Scheuer in. It was, in fact, hardly large enough to accommodate the dozen men who were already sitting around with collars opened and shoes off by the time Queenie and I arrived. They showed one of those pornographic films. I tried not to look at it because I knew too well from past experience that every piece of mess that picture showed would give those tricks of mine ideas—just in case they hadn't had them in the first place. Well, while the picture was going on, and as the film got hotter, the tricks would come by making little sitting-down passes at Queenie and me. When this thing was finally over, the two of us retired into the bedroom and the men kept coming as they wished, one after another. The whole night was pure murder because we girls were not allowed to limit the men either by time or action. That, you know, is why many girls will not take business calls. They prefer not to be under such strict orders.

"You know, there are also men who want a girl to be a companion for a couple of days or a week. And they want you for the works, just as though you really belong to them. They want you to be with them from breakfast to bed. They treat you—well, not like a wife—more like a mistress. They're lovely to you. I guess when you get a deal like that you get a taste of the way 'square' women live with their 'square' guys—loved, petted, and pampered.

"I'm queer, though. One time a bigshot from Puerto Rico made me his mistress for a week. You'd think I'd be happy, wouldn't you? Well, I was almost as depressed as I am during the orgies I

go on. It's a different kind of depression, of course, but I'm still depressed. I get filled with envy. I find I'm forced to face the truth of why I'm in the life. I try to tell myself what I tell strangers: I'm in this for the money. That's nonsense. I'm in this because there doesn't seem to be any other place in the world for me. I don't know where I belong.

"Well, like I say, I made thirteen attempts at suicide in the last couple of years. I flopped each time. I'm glad I flopped. Of course, I had to flop. You know, I have never yet succeeded at any big thing I wanted to do. Maybe that is because I never wanted anything enough. Or because I was always afraid to want anything too much. I guess that goes back to the feeling of worthlessness I've had from childhood on. Yes, I know, I'm pretty and smart and talented. I can act. I'm a good singer. I play the piano. So what? Does all this make me outstanding? Does it mean I'll make the big time?

"I long to make the big time. More than anything. I want to make it in order to justify my grandparents' faith in me. They, by the way, are the only members of my family with whom I correspond today. You know, I believe they are the only people who ever really loved me. And they are so anxious for me to become a fine actress.

"I'm a fine actress, all right, so fine that when I give up every nickel I earn the hard way, to Blood Long, the fellow I euphemistically call my 'sweet man,' I do it with a smile. He's colored, you know, but that doesn't bother me. That I overstepped long ago. What does bother me, though, is his ignorance—not just lack of education but closed-

mindedness, and his friends who are just like he is himself, and treat their women as he does me.

"I can't tell you how terrible he is. And yet I can't get away from him. And it isn't even a matter of sex, you know. Half the time, I have to stimulate him the way I do my customers. He's really not the greatest lover in the world. Besides, sex isn't all that important to me, not under the circumstances.

"Why do I remain with him then? Last night I got drunk and I'll tell you what I told Queenie about Blood. I said, 'I guess the reason I stay with him is because I need, when I get up in the morning, to look at the face of someone I feel to be even lower than I am myself.'

Louise, more than any other inmate of the House of Detention explored in this book, is an enigma. All of the others are understandable because their fates are, in a very real sense, dictated by their poverty and the poverty of their whole world since before they were born. But Louise, having been born and bred in a wealthy and cultured home, was forced to reject her caste and class and to voluntarily throw in her lot with the ignorant, the uncouth, the sickened and twisted outcasts with whom she lives today. How is this possible? How does it happen that a woman of better than normal intellect, not driven by dire economic necessity or outer force, can so deeply reject the standards of her culture? The answer to this question actually applies not alone to Louise Johnson but also to the great number of other business call girls who have let themselves pass back through the barriers of middle and upper-middle-class culture to the life of degradation they feel be-

fits them. The truth is that they, like Louise, were never really part of their cultures. They were always hemmed in by walls of isolation, and it seems to them that they can only pass through those walls when they are with others who cannot belong either—other prostitutes, pimps, homosexuals, drug addicts, con men—all of those who band together in “the life,” because they feel no one else ever has wanted them or would want them.

Certainly, Louise felt this way from the time she was an infant. As she herself tells later on in the story, far more eloquently than I can, she felt herself entirely rejected by both her mother and father, so much so that all her material advantages meant nothing by comparison. As she describes her parents, it is obvious that she received even less of what counts to a child—love, affection, and involvement than Joyce, Bertha, Cora May, and Cindy received from their parents. Her mother, infantile herself, could not give Louise, when she was an infant, the love and warmth every baby needs. She was always pushing the child away as she pushed Louise's father away in favor of her lovers. And when, at age nine, Louise witnessed her mother provoking her uncle into a display of passionate affection, this same mother who had never shown Louise the slightest warmth, she was impelled toward the devastating conviction that her mother did not love her—not because she, the mother, was inadequate, but rather because Louise must be unlovable.

Louise's relationship with her father unfortunately contributed to this conviction of her own unlovable nature. The father was always cold and unapproachable.

Here is Louise's own story, the best illustration I know to disprove the generally held American notion that call girls are suave and smooth women of business who use their ill-gotten gains in pursuit of a gay life of silk and luxury that is beyond the comprehension and certainly the potential of all of us “good” women. Unfortunately for Louise and all of her sisters, that purple velvet bed on which she is supposed to loll by day and work by night, and those adoring, desirous, passionate males who are reportedly competing to press hundred-dollar bills into her hot and grasping little paws, are just as much myth as is the notion that she has been driven to “the life” by her greed for material advantages.

As Louise puts it, when she talks honestly, “I'd give up every nickel of my annual thirty to thirty-five thousand tax-free dollars for a chance at loving someone who could also love me in return. Always, all my life, I was ready to give up money and all the possessions it could buy for love. When I was a kid, I'd have exchanged all the toys in my playroom in return for one month of having my own mother put me to bed at night.

“My mother was very beautiful and very selfish. She played around a lot but could pull the wool over everyone's eyes, especially my father's. Poor deluded man always thought she was a cold woman.

“But I knew better, even before that time when I was nine years old when I came on her and my Uncle Charlie in her bedroom. Charlie was my father's brother and a lot younger than Dad and he'd just gotten engaged to a pretty girl who was a lot younger than he was, nineteen and, quite literally,

just out of a convent. My mother was standing close to my uncle, naked as a jaybird, and she was telling him something like, you know, that child won't be able to hold you, Charlie. You'll come running back to me before your honeymoon's done. And I remember she stroked his face so gently. God, she was never so gentle with me. And she murmured those suggestive words, the kind I didn't know the meaning of then, but make a practice of using myself today. And while I stood watching her, she got a tight hold on my uncle and pulled him as close as she could get him. I'll always remember the last words she said before he flipped and carried her to the bed.

"'You're so beautiful.' Those were the words she said to him.

"Anyhow, I was fourteen years old when my mother left my father and me and ran off—not with my Uncle Charlie but with another man about whom my father would never speak. Neither would he let my mother's name pass his lips or mine when I was in his presence. My father was an uncommunicative man anyhow—a big, clumsy, silent man. The best thing I can say for him to this day is that everything he ever touched turned to money. And once I've said that, I've exhausted everything good there is to tell about him.

"I was so afraid after my mother left and I longed to share my fears and difficulties with my father. But he frightened me so that I could not try. He made me feel like a clumsy stranger in his icy world. The sight of him was sufficient to freeze my tongue. And yet on this one day, when I was almost sixteen and ready to graduate from high school (Yes, I was a prodigy in school. Aren't lone-

ly little bastards like me always prodigies? I say, watch the prodigies if you want to see the ones who are going to turn into the worst misfits in their lives!), I approached my father and said, 'Daddy, could I have a few minutes of your time?'

"'Yes.'

"'Please, I want to know what happened to my mother. Everyone asks me and . . .' The truth was that nobody had ever asked but that I have always, all my life up until today, found it easier to speak for other people than for myself.

"'You tell everybody that if they have questions about my personal life they can come to me.'

"'But they ask me, Daddy.'

"'You're a child.'

"'I'm going on sixteen. Why did you and mother separate, Daddy?'

"'That is not your business.'

"My father was furtive as hell. Now I'm not condemning him for that. All that I'm trying to put across is that I took my shyness from him. I always believed that he had a great deal to hide and that I did too. That's one reason I never made friends, I guess. I knew that everyone at school thought I was pretty and smart and all that, but nobody tried to get close to me. And I was afraid to try myself to get close to anyone else. I'm talking now about a real closeness you can feel in your guts. I never did feel it. But I used to be able to pretend I did, especially with fellows whom I let make love to me. Sure, I was promiscuous as hell from away back when. I went to bed with *every* Tom, Dick, and Harry. Not that I enjoyed sex. I always hated it. But I kept thinking it was a way I might find somebody who'd mean something.

"Well, when I was eighteen there was a boy, Larry. With him, I don't know, I was able to care—sort of. What I mean when he kissed me, he set my tongue on fire. I dreamed of marrying Larry. But it seemed that plenty of other girls had the same notion too. So once I told him that I wanted to stick a sign on him. I said my sign would read: 'Don't touch—hands off, I own.'

"You know what Larry said when I told him that dream of mine? He asked what made me think I was woman enough to hold a man like him? I felt so . . . unattractive, when he was finished with me. You know, it's only recently I started feeling attractive again. I figured, finally, after I had become a call girl, that if so many men are willing to pay to go to bed with me, there must be *something* to me after all. But I don't believe it inside of me. I feel queer inside. I go into a restaurant and I hear people laughing and I know that I can never be part of anything like that. Laugh a lot, certainly, but my laughter is forced. And I'm shy. When I go into a public place, I have to brace myself. I imagine people turning and looking at me and calling me an oddball.

"This boy I was in love with when I was young—knowing him added to my feeling of being queer and not belonging in this world. Well, in many ways this boy was like I am—insincere. He didn't go with me because he liked me or anything—only because I was pretty and he could brag to his friends about me. To listen to him you would have thought that sexually I was the greatest thing since Seven-Up. Once I heard him discussing me with a crowd of his friends:

"That girl's got me popping my shoelaces. She's built for action."

"Oh, a girl's a girl. They're all the same in the dark."

"No. This one's got something to move the beast in you."

"Do tell. What moves the beast?"

"Well, just look at her curves. Then, besides, she's got movement."

"The leader of the bunch my boy friend traveled with, a wiseacre, said:

"Would you have any objection if I tried your girl out? Just to check on whether you're telling the truth or not."

"My boy friend told his pal he would not get to first base with me but that he had his permission to try to make me anyhow. I felt so hurt as I listened. But when I finally plucked up enough courage to speak to Larry, he told me that part of the fun in having a girl was building her up with other fellows and then watching their eyes light up in envy as you walked down the street with her. A boy wanted to *brag* about his girl, he told me. I tried to get a rise out of him by threatening to leave him, but I couldn't. I couldn't ever get a rise out of my father, either."

For all her pain and misery, Louise Johnson, more realistic than many call girls, recognizes that her life cannot compare in debasement to the lives of other former House of Detention inmates like Joyce, Bertha, Cindy, and Cora May. She may dislike being a prostitute, but at least she knows herself to be a successful prostitute, an aristocrat of her profession. She may sell her body, but the sale of it is altogether different from the way Joyce,

Bertha, Cora May, and Cindy sell their bodies. She sells herself for Blood Long, despite the indignities he heaps on her. But she also sells herself for her sumptuous apartment, high on the twentieth floor, overlooking the lake and skating rink on Central Park, one of the most striking views in all of New York. She sells herself for clothes other women only dream of. And unlike Joyce, Bertha, Cora May, and Cindy, she is more than welcome in her elegance at the most exclusive restaurants and night spots in the city. In prostitution, as in every facet of living in America, wealthy and successful call girls like Louise are approved and flattered while poor prostitutes like Joyce, Bertha, Cora May, and Cindy are, not alone despised, but castigated out of all proportion. That is why, although Louise lives and functions against the law as entirely as Joyce, Bertha, Cora May, and Cindy, they are in the House of Detention as often as they're out of it, while she is still scandalized over the fact that she had to go there once. And she says, quite rightly:

"I never would have been arrested, you know, if certain policemen hadn't been under pressure for doing what I know they've done ever since I've been in 'the life' and as far back as Polly Adler's day that we know about—taking payoffs from call girls as well as from junk distributors and numbers men.

"Now, the first thing I learned when I came into the life is that the police payoff would have to be as much a part of my monthly budget as my rent or telephone answering service. What I mean is, I knew I had to make police payoffs just as surely as I had to pay off the manager, superintendent, and

elevator men in my building in order that they would be quiet about my life.

"And I did. I paid all of them off faithfully every month. And I guess you could say I paid the police graft most faithfully of all. I paid off through Blood. But then, the last three months before I was arrested, although I didn't find it out till later, Blood didn't pay the cops the \$300 a month I gave him. He didn't mean not to pay them, as he told the collection cop who must be nameless in your story, I'm sorry to say, when he came to pick up from us. He assured him later, on the next month which would be the fourth one, he would pay the \$1,200 we owed. And the cop seemed satisfied. I'm sure he seemed satisfied because I know Blood would have had too much sense to have let him go away mad. I mean, he really didn't want me in jail, and he wasn't born yesterday, so he knew we couldn't get away with holding out, if the cop objected. But he didn't, although he must have or what happened to me couldn't have happened.

"What happened is that, exactly three days after the cop made his visit to Blood, in the middle of a campaign accusing the cops of not working hard enough to clean up vice, my apartment was raided. I was in bed with —, a name that would be as well known to your readers as the company he's the president of. Jean Martin, a call girl I knew from Chicago from the times I covered conventions there, was visiting me and entertaining a couple of tricks from her home town. All three of them were in the living room, very drunk and in various stages of undress.

"When three officers, two lieutenants, and a captain came to get us, I should have known, in view

of the great array [six policemen including three officers to pick up a couple of call girls doesn't make sense under reasonable circumstances] that something important was up. But I didn't have my wits about me, I was pretty drunk myself, as I discovered when I woke in the House of Detention the morning after with a hangover to end all hangovers.

"Well, to make a long story short, my millionaire client, being who he was, departed to his home in Westchester never to be heard from again, while the rest of us, Jean, and her two friends and I, were questioned for several hours.

"Then, as I say, Jean and I were brought down to the stationhouse and booked. And, again, I would have known something unusual was happening if I hadn't been so drunk. Because the press had been notified and was there to take pictures. And, really, we weren't that notable. Or at least we wouldn't have been if the police hadn't set us—or, at any rate, me—up as a patsy to get them off the hook.

"When the newsmen were through, we were taken in a paddywagon to the House of Detention. The next morning, my lawyer arrived, looking angry and carrying the newspapers which, under the caption 'Police Nab Vice Dolls,' had pictures of me looking as drunk and disreputable as I felt.

"My lawyer said that I would be taken down to court at 100 Centre Street for a hearing and that he would have me released on bail until trial. I asked him whether I would have any problem at my trial and he said he didn't think so, that although the police had tapped my wire, they couldn't use the wire taps against me because they

were illegal in court. Unless one of Jean's tricks would testify against me, and both had told him they'd refuse, I couldn't be convicted.

"All the same, at my trial the officer who'd tapped my wire took the stand and read from his notes, written on the basis of what he'd heard on my telephone. I was told, even then, that I couldn't be convicted on the basis of the wiretap, that all the wiretap could be used for was to establish a basis for the raid.

"But I *was* convicted on that basis, because there was no other proof against me; neither of Jean's tricks were in court to testify. And I think I became the first call girl to be sent to the House of Detention since the last witch hunt that took place way back I don't remember when."

Actually, that last "witch hunt," or overt and overly publicized police campaign against call girls they ordinarily leave very much alone, took place in 1958. It was conducted, after a broadcast by the noted commentator, Edward R. Murrow, alleging that there were four to five thousand call girls, employed, as Louise Johnson is, to help businessmen swing their deals by using sex. The Murrow program was called by the National Association of Manufacturers "a labor plot designed to divert public attention from labor scandals," and was vehemently discounted by the Police Department, which accused Mr. Murrow of lying and demanded that he reveal the sources of his information. The result was a loud, if short-lived police campaign, not against big businessmen, but rather against call girls. The hypocrisy of the campaign was, of course, apparent when the Police Commissioner, Stephen Kennedy, demanded to know Mr. Mur-

row's sources, as if a radio commentator could have available to him information about prostitution in a city like New York that the Commissioner couldn't secure through his own sources. It was laughable, and many people joked about it saying, "If Ed Murrow knows more about prostitution in New York than the Police Commissioner does, then maybe the two of them ought to exchange jobs."

The police campaign, though, was no joke to call girls picked up, not because they were greater public nuisances in 1958 than they'd been in 1953, but rather because they were good news copy for the police.

As call-girl schoolteacher Virginia McManus, arrested with her friend and colleague Beatrice Garfield on February 5 (by eight detectives and the Deputy Commissioner himself, who came along on this raid of a prostitutes' apartment at a time when New York was suffering with two unresolved kidnappings and several unsolved murders) said:

"Well, we were the patsies for the police, the Willie Blys of 1958. You know, Willie Bly about whom it was said, 'What a nice man is Willie Bly. He took the rap for you and I.'"

The rarity of a call girl in the prison, if one didn't know it from the prison's history, could be aptly proved by consideration of this statement from Louise Johnson of her time there:

"Well, I was an oddity. I'd never felt so unusual and different in my life or been treated as such an object of curiosity. There were peace and civil rights demonstrators in the jail when I was, bright, wonderful college girls from such a different milieu that you'd have thought the girls' imaginations

would be stirred by them. But they weren't. I mean, the girls were kind to them and very interested in them, but not in the same way they were in me. I guess the reason was that there were several of them and only one of me in years and years.

"Well, honestly, from the day I came into that place, you could have thought I was Elizabeth Taylor or, more likely, Richard Burton if you'd seen the way those girls gathered and looked at me. Nobody asked me for my autograph but I think they would have if they'd thought about it. Every place I'd go—to my work assignment, to the roof for Recreation—I'd be mobbed. Once, for kicks, I thought I'd write and ask the warden to give me an honor guard.

"No, seriously, though, at night when I'd be in my cell trying to read or write letters, I wouldn't be able to for all of the girls camped outside, talking or playing poker or whatever, but also observing me all the time. As I said to Queenie when I came out: 'If you want to forget you're a low dirty call girl and think of yourself as a princess or a queen, just go to the House of Detention for a couple of days. You'd be surprised at how, without lifting a finger, you'll get a brand new blown-up image of yourself because you'll be treated like a queen.'"

# 7

## "Put Them Down as the Underdogs and Belittle Them"

Name—Rusty Bricker

Age—27

Education—High School

Number of times in the House of Detention—9

If Louise Johnson, "without lifting a finger," felt herself to be the unofficial queen of the prison during her single sentence, Rusty Bricker, with much malice aforethought, has caused herself to be crowned the official king during all the nine times she's been in the House of Detention.

Every time you see Rusty she just got a haircut. Her mannish-cut red hair is constantly slicked down as tight as she can get it, and she smells of barbershop perfume. She wears new, resplendently bright (orange-brown with traces of yellow) men's

shoes, blue jeans but men's jeans that button in front, a sickeningly green sweatshirt, and a thick, shaggy army jacket dyed brown in a vain attempt at matching the color of the highly shined shoes. Yet she's a handsome woman, and would be even handsomer as a man, even though she's drunk, reeking drunk, most of the time you see her. And she's a *mean* alcoholic. Her violence, when she comes home drunk to eighteen-year-old blond Patricia Mannis who "fell in love" with her a year ago when they were both in the House of Detention and who now lives with her in Greenwich Village, erupts unpredictably over anything or nothing. In an instant, for example, she may overturn the table with her food set up because she doesn't like the dinner Patricia's prepared for her: food and plates are thrust to the floor. She smashes bottles, menacing Patricia with the sharp edges. And sometimes, when she's not drunk, she'll sit playing solitaire for hours, talking to no one and abiding no hindrance from Patricia or anyone, even if her apartment happens to be full of company.

"But Rusty's wonderful when she's feeling good," Patricia says tolerantly, "and she's strong, you know. Nobody ever gets her down. Even in the House of D., nobody could get her down. And that's what I love about her. The first time I ever saw her, you know, was on admission in the House of D. I was so scared and everything. But Rusty wasn't. She told them, oh, she told them all."

Rusty, evidently "feeling good" the second time I saw her and Patricia in their shabby and gaudy yellow and purple painted apartment, basked in Patricia's admiration and recalled the incidents of her admission to which Patricia had reference.

"The first thing I saw when I walked in the House of D.," she said, "was—well, the first thing I saw was Patricia, all that golden hair she's got. And the thing that I spotted next when I walked in there was this officer with red hair. And I thought to myself, you know I know her and I know that she's gay because I've seen her at the Sea Colony, and when she passed by me, she gave me a funny look. Like she recognized me too and was scared. And her eyes, it was like she was begging me not to say what I knew. And I gave her a look back like 'You'll be my slave now and I'll blow your whole scene if you don't do what I want.'

"So she didn't look at me any more, and the next time I saw her was after a fight I had in the doctors' examining room. This damn aide who stood by the table where I was being examined, this bitch told me, she said, 'What's the matter, baby? You don't like that thing inside you? You don't feel good? Well, shame on you then, because you'll never come any closer to having a man inside of you.'

"I didn't answer her, not just at first. I just lay still on the table till her back was turned for a minute. Then I jumped her. I got her down on the floor and began beating the shit out of her. I would have killed her if these two officers hadn't come and pulled me off of her.

"So next thing I knew, the doctor's calling the redhead officer and telling her to put me in deadlock. At first I wasn't going to go. I wasn't going to let her put me in deadlock. Listen, anybody puts Rusty Bricker in the deadlock has got to expect a broken head. But then I thought, let me go quietly and get to be alone with the redhead and tell her

what the score is—what's what and who's who and who's going to be the boss of things. So I let her take me by the arm and lead me out to the cell block. And all the time we were in the elevator, I didn't say a word. I didn't even say anything when she started to lock me in my cell. And when I was locked up, I didn't say anything. I just gave her a look like, 'You'd better not make me too mad if you know what is good for you.' I looked at her, you know, and she knew just what was on my mind without me having to say a word, and we were communicating. And she asked me, she said, 'Is there anything you want, Rusty? That is your name, isn't it?' And I said, 'Miss Bricker is my name to you. Rusty is my nickname and you are not my mother and you are not a friend of mine, so I don't want you using my nickname.'

"Then I asked her what her name was and she said, 'Royce.' And I said, 'I mean your first name.' And when she didn't tell me for a while, I gave her another look like 'If you got half a brain or any sense, you won't make me ask you again for your name.' So she told me, 'Lillian.'

"I said, 'Lillian, is that the name they call you by in that swinging place you hang in, man?'

"She said, 'I don't know what place you're talking about, Rusty.'

"And I thought, looking at her, I thought maybe she really doesn't know. Maybe she's a different redhead from the one I saw at the Sea Colony. But that didn't stop me, because I knew she was afraid of me. And if the reason she was afraid was that she thought I knew her scene and could blow it for her, all right; that I respected. But if she was just afraid of me because she thought I was a tough

prisoner, then I had no respect for her. Because I knew officers who were afraid in other places, and they were sad, I mean pitiful. And I knew how to make them do what I wanted, how to put them down as the underdogs and belittle them in front of the girls. And when it comes to that point in a jail where you can belittle the officers in front of people, why, then the girls don't respect them at all. Because then, they don't think that they're officers at all. And they respect you instead as though you were the officer.

"Well, that is one way I become king of my floor in whatever jail I am in. That is one way. And I am always the king, always the leader, in jail and out."

Rusty was born and spent most of her young girlhood in Miami Beach, Florida. Her mother died when she was five. She hardly remembers her at all except as someone about whom her father, a tall, dark man, very quiet and withdrawn, always said, "If only your mother had lived, you'd be a different girl than you are. If only your mother had lived to bring you up."

Actually, she was brought up by her father's sister. She remembers her as a thin, dark, excitable woman with no cordiality about her, but rather always full of a look of strain and exasperation. She remembers her as always overdressed, always over-made-up, and with too much jewelry everywhere, clanging and banging as she walked.

Her father was, in many ways, the exact opposite of her aunt, a tall man with a handsome, square, ruddy face, much like Rusty's own, judging from his photographs. He was slow to anger and quick to laugh, but with strangers, never with

Rusty. When there wasn't company, which was seldom, he'd sit reading his newspaper, hidden from her behind his newspaper, so that, desperate to get his attention, she so annoyed him that her aunt or the maid had, finally, to carry her from the room in tears.

From the beginning, from the time she was a small child, she was a problem at school and at home. In first and second grades, as far back as that, she intimidated the other children, confounded her teachers, and infuriated her aunt. And her father, no matter what turmoil she caused remained bland and smiling and basically unconcerned.

Her father and her aunt had a fight about her one night when she was about fourteen. They had a great many fights, of course; but perhaps she remembered this one so clearly because it was about her and because her father lost his temper, betrayed genuine anger at her aunt. And also because she had to know, listening to them, that neither one of them really cared about her.

She was in bed, upstairs, asleep. It was quite late. She was suddenly awakened by the sound of her father's footfalls on the walk beneath her window. She could tell by the sound that he was drunk, as he often was when he came home these nights.

She heard him come in. Then, all at once, she heard her aunt's voice.

"I thought," she said coldly, "that someone ought to tell you what you're doing to your daughter."

"What I'm doing to my daughter?" And he was about to say something more, but he didn't. He

caught himself and asked with a great calm, "What are you talking about?"

"Let me read you this note from the psychologist in Rusty's school—she's been seeing a psychologist for three months, in case you didn't know it. And the psychologist suggests you take her out of public school and send her to a special school for behavior problems. Now the psychologist's exact words are: 'Her behavior is erratic, violent—'"

"Spare me the rest," Rusty's father said.

Her aunt continued, "'—rebellious, aggressive—'"

"Damn it, I said I didn't want to hear any more," Rusty's father shouted.

And then her aunt made some prophecies about Rusty that would be more than fulfilled. She said that if he tried now, her father might still be able to control her. But if he didn't, she said that there would come a time when nothing and nobody would be able to control her. And that time certainly came.

From that time on, with the dreadful intensity of the very young, she hated her aunt and despised her father. And soon afterward, when she was fifteen, she became involved with Miss Madison, a lesbian teacher in her school, and stopped thinking about them at all.

Rusty's description of her interlude with Miss Madison may be revealing of the psychopathology of her personality, distinguishing her in yet one more way from the mass of generally cowed, beaten, guilt-ridden inmates of the House of Detention. Other lesbian inmates, when they discuss their first homosexual experience, emphasize, one way or another, that it shook them profoundly. They tell

how, for so long, they could not discuss what had happened to them with anyone, they could not even admit it to themselves. Talking about it now, after all they've been through and in the light of what they are, they still talk about the tenderness and the pain that came with the joy because they knew they were offending against society and they were afraid.

But Rusty at fifteen was no more afraid or ashamed of her homosexual experience than she was of the fact that she stole and forged checks in order to be with Miss Madison. It did not matter to her that her father and her aunt and her teachers and her friends, her whole world, disapproved of and condemned her. She couldn't have cared less about their disapproval and condemnation. And she couldn't care less today. All that mattered to her then, as now, was her own gratification, her own wishes and desires.

"Well," she says about Miss Madison, "I first got to know her in gym. She'd always pay more attention to me than to the other girls. Then one thing led to another and we started out kissing, you know. It gradually ended up till we went all the way together. Then, one time, I stayed behind in the gym after everyone else was gone and I wanted her to give up the work to me, you know. But she was afraid. Well, then, she did it anyhow when I kept asking and asking her to. And the janitor came in while we were still laying on the mat. And the next thing you know, it was all over the school and all over the town about her and me. And she was afraid and my father took me out of school."

"But I'd meet her anyhow. I'd sneak out to meet

her. What I did, I'd tell my aunt I was going to a girl friend's house. And I'd have my friend prepared, so that when my aunt telephoned, as we knew she would, she'd say that I just left for another girl friend's. And so on. And so on." She hesitates and giggles appreciatively at herself.

"Well, Miss Madison wasn't a straight les, you know. She turned out to be one of those bisexual bitches. And she was involved with this guy at the same time she's carrying on with me. And this one time she told me that she and he were going to Mexico and she asked did I want to come along. So I thought—why not? And she said, you know, in so many words, 'If we're going to go to Mexico, we need money!' And I thought she was right. And I knew she put some money in the bank, that she had money in the bank for the trip. And she told me that what she intended to do was to overdraw on her account. She could do that because, if she withdrew the money on Friday, they wouldn't discover it till Monday when we'd be in Acapulco or somewhere.

"So I figured, 'Why not?' And I went home and got my father's checkbook and I had forged his name enough times on my school report card so I could do it pretty well. And I signed one of his checks and brought it to a florist downtown. I knew this girl, Kay, who was in the hospital, and I thought it would be nice if I sent her a dozen red roses at the same time I cashed the check. So I sent a dozen red roses and the florist gave me the change for a twenty-five-dollar check.

"Cashing my father's checks was easy in my neighborhood. Everybody knew me. Everybody

knew my father. So it was very easy to just go around with his checks and just sign them off."

"Now when we were ready to leave, we had about three and a half, well, three thousand dollars, between that bitch, me, and this guy. And on Friday morning they came and took my money and said they'd pick up the tickets and come back for me at noon. Well, they didn't come."

Rusty admits, with some chagrin, that Miss Madison was one person, probably the only one in her whole life, who was more than her match in shrewdness.

"So I was mad," Rusty says. "You can imagine how goddamn burned I was. And all I could think of was that I wanted my revenge. I wanted to hurt her, you know, because she hurt me and burned me. So I figured the only thing that could hurt her anymore was to hurt her mother whom she did care about. So I figured, 'To hell with it. I'm going to burn her mother's house down.' And I tried. I set a fire, but the next-door neighbors happened to be looking out their windows although I didn't see them and they called the cops and the Fire Department. So they came and took me to the hospital, the psycho ward. And I figured that, as long as I was there, I might as well make everybody sorry for me. Things would go easier for me if I did. So what I did, I had some pills, some kind of pills—I forget what—that I took out of the nurses' closet—I was pretty light-fingered by now and I could hook anything from anyone. So I hooked these pills and I took an overdose. But in the Rec. Room, you know, where nobody could miss what I was doing. I wanted to be saved."

After two weeks in the mental hospital, her psy-

chopathy having been clearly labeled, Rusty was sent to a Florida school for delinquents. Here she found young girls, like the women in the House of Detention today, who were her natural and logical prey. And she used them, as she uses the women in the House of Detention, to work off her compulsively antisocial behavior. She pitted the girls against the matrons and was even able to pit some of the matrons against one another. They, who had so little personal freedom themselves, were caught up in her sparkle and glitter and would have done anything to remain in her horizon. They vastly admired and wanted to be identified with her because, not recognizing the checks and reins of the institution any more than she'd recognized those of the outside community, she was never limited either physically or psychologically and so couldn't be humbled by her environment. She was the inmates' symbol of fearlessness and resolution, and they all strove, with little or no possibility of success, to be like her.

When Rusty left the Miami House of Detention, she discovered and became a vital, sought-after part of the Miami teen-age gay crowd. A few of them were like Rusty, seemingly strong and self-sufficient, but most of them, her acolytes from the moment they met her, were kids who'd left home or been kicked out, vagrants who lived from hand-to-mouth. They clung like leeches to anyone who'd give them free hand-outs. They were constantly in and out of Youth Houses for this or that piece of petty pilfering. When they needed to, femmes and butches, working together, picked up tricks and put on circuses for them. Rusty did a good bit of this kind of prostituting before she was seventeen.

"I knew this girl in Delray Beach who had a crush on me and was always begging me to come and stay with her. So I thought I'd go there, but I needed money to travel on. So here I go and I grab my father's checkbook. And I made out a check and I went to the store I was working at. And I cashed this check to myself. You know, from my father. And they naturally trusted me implicitly because I'd been handling hundreds of dollars. So I made the check thing and I went to Delray Beach. And I stayed in Delray Beach for a while after that. Then my father found me and came down drunk and wanted to beat the crap out of me. He didn't touch me though. And I said, 'You don't have to beat me because I'll get out of your life anyway. Dad, you were always around, but I never knew you. Because I think, in all my life, if you put everything we said together, we didn't say more than three thousand words together.'

"The femme I stayed with in Delray Beach was named Judy and she was a knockout and there was nothing she wouldn't do for me. We were kopacetic till her mother found out about us and she couldn't see her daughter being gay. So one night she talked to me and said, 'I don't want my daughter in the gay life.' She said, 'She's infatuated with you for some reason. I don't understand what it is but I don't want my daughter to be a homosexual. I want you to get out of the house and not see her any more.'

So I told her mother if she'd give me travel expenses and some bread over, I'd leave Judy and promise never to see her or call her or write to her.

"So she gave me enough to travel for a while,

and when that ran out, I kept on traveling on the bum."

She naturally gravitated, wherever she landed, to the gay parts of town. She made quick friendships and broke them just as quickly. When she needed to, for a "quick buck," she found a trick and some other girl to work a circus with.

Rusty arrived, finally, where she'd always wanted to be—in Los Angeles.

Los Angeles, to Rusty, meant the streets of Las Palmas where the fairies, surveying the streets for someone cute, and the bulldykes, doing the same, take over in the desperate hours after midnight. There is a coffee house there, primarily for teenaged queers and those who want them.

Rusty hung out in the Las Palmas Coffee shop, and she met a girl named Jenny who took her home to a dingy apartment and let her make love to her. Jenny was a highly paid prostitute. She took good care of Rusty for a short while. But like most lesbians outside of jail, she wanted variety in her love life. Once she and Rusty had poured out the intimate details of their lives, Jenny's interest in Rusty took a nosedive, as did Rusty's interest in her. She still liked her in bed—on occasion. But Jenny had other bulldykes. And Rusty found other femmes.

About two weeks after Jenny and Rusty became "tight," they separated. Rusty began going to private clubs in the hills, up twisting dirt roads where men dance with men, women with women. And to the leather bars with bright-colored murals on their walls, moving pictures of men and women wearing black leather jackets and wrestling realistically, their faces sexually aroused. Here she

picked up with femmes and other bulldykes who threw weekend parties, usually planned in an instant on Friday and lasting at least until Monday. You went into locked bedrooms with girls you'd never seen before and stayed for half an hour maybe. And as the door opened to let you out, you glimpsed the girl who was coming to take your place with the one you'd been with. Rusty became disgusted with Los Angeles and began to think of going on to new places when she met Chuck. Chuck was not gay himself. But he "scored off gay men sometimes." And he was as uninhibited and violent and without conscience as Rusty herself.

"Chuck and I got very tight," Rusty said. "Not sex-wise or anything. Just tight. Just very close. So he says to me one day, 'I've got to go cash a check.' So I started laughing. So he said, 'What are you laughing about?' And I had some drinks, so I said, 'Don't mention checks to me. That's what got me up here.' So he said, 'What happened?' And I told him, 'I cashed some checks on my father.' He laughed and said, 'Well, that's what I'm doing right now. I'm cashing checks on my Uncle Sam. I'm cashing government checks.' So I said, 'Oh, you're cashing government checks?' He said, 'Yes, I'm going to the mailboxes and when I see a plain envelope that says U.S. Treasury, I pick it up and cash it.'"

Chuck asked Rusty to work with him on his government-check "racket." He would snitch the checks and Rusty would cash them. She says, "Every time I had to cash a check, I put on a maternity top and skirt. Because who would suspect a nice pregnant woman buying clothes for her expected baby was cashing bad checks? Right? I'd

put a towel in my underwear and wear a maternity top. I let my hair grow so I could tease it and look very feminine. People couldn't understand me walking around with a flat belly one day and a big one the next. And they knew I was butch, so what was I doing looking like a femme? Some of them started getting wise to what was going on pretty soon, but what the hell—they had their own rackets.

"In the meanwhile, Chuck and I had money all the time. Baby, we were balling. But come to find out he was a junkie. He took pills. Tuinals. Pills are worse than horse, worse than heroin. I never knew anything about pill addicts till I met Chuck this one night and he's high on Tuinals. And he comes on about, 'Tonight, man, we'll make a *big* score. We'll go pick up on these two rich queers I know and clip them for every coin—I mean, we're going to leave them pantless. You'll come along to stand chickie for the cops.'

"But I didn't want to go at the time because there was this little femme I was trying to make. So he took another gay broad with him. She was a pillhead, too. She came from a wealthy family and was going to this headshrinker who was supposed to cure her of her habit. But she was real far-out. Going to a headshrinker in the daytime and coming on big in the bar full of Tuinal every night. That was the broad went along with Chuck. They never did find the two rich queers Chuck was looking for. But he wasn't too put down. He had a firearm on him and he ended up shooting at some wino who was in this alley dead-out anyways. I don't know why he did that—just flipped, I guess.

"He came to the bar and I asked him how he'd scored.

"His pill bit was done and he told me about the shooting. He remembered it all, everything that happened. I thought he was kidding at first but I found out pretty soon that he wasn't. He said, 'I got to cut out for New York right now. You want to go?'

"So I figure I better leave town while the leaving's good. If I stay here, I'll only be arrested. I told Chuck I'd go with him.

"Next thing Chuck's got this '62 Impala. He stole the car and took the keys to it out of the guy's pocket who owned it. Also his credit card for gas. He stole some license plates off another car and changed them on the way down.

"We made terrific time to New York. We weren't stopped once by the police. Never got in any trouble or anything."

In New York, Rusty came to the "meat rack" of Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village. This is a place that was recognized long ago as the magnet for lonesome men and women homosexuals from all over. Everyone who's anyone in gay life descends on the "meat rack" sooner or later. There are exaggeratedly effeminate queens who love to get rigged up in ladies' Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes—their chests are taped to give them realistic cleavage between the falsies they wear. There are men in gray flannel suits who strive to look like straights but disclose themselves as what they are by no more than the moving of an eyebrow, the flicking of a finger. There are femmes like Rusty's Patricia, all girl-woman if you judge books by their

covers. And last but not least, there are bulldykes like Rusty.

Rusty also became a frequent patron of the homosexual bars on Eighth Street and MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side and, when she wanted a change of pace, off Lenox Avenue in Harlem.

"Well, right after I came to New York, I was arrested for felonious assault and robbery and violation of the Sullivan Act," she said. "Three other girls and I had nothing to do one night and we just walked around the park. This one girl had a knife on her. And I had a little knife that I always carry in my pocket because when people see you're gay and want to fight, you've got to be able to defend yourself, fight back. And because you don't know who you're going to meet in New York and when you'll need to fight. So a knife's a good thing to carry.

"So anyway, after our walk we went to Mary's Bar and one of the girls with us is married. And here comes her husband and grabs her. We told him to leave her alone, but he wouldn't. So this other girl and I went outside to find some cops. We told two cops what was happening. They saw we were gay so they didn't care. They said, 'We have to go and check another spot out. We'll be back later.' And when we went back inside the bar, we saw that this girl's husband pinched her black and blue. So we tried to get him off her. And the next thing, somebody called the police and they're there in a hot second. And they arrested us because the girl's husband said we assaulted him and stole \$20 off of him.

"So here we are in court the next morning, ac-

cused of felonious assault and robbery and violation of the Sullivan Act. The reason we were accused of robbery was that this guy, the girl's husband, pulls twenty bucks out of his pocket and says, 'They took this money off of me, Your Honor.' I started to laugh and the judge told me to be quiet. But I didn't stop laughing. I mean I couldn't. And the judge was really mad at me. And I kept on laughing anyhow. So he said, 'I'll charge you with contempt. I'll charge you with contempt.' So finally, you know, I stopped laughing.

"Well, they couldn't prove either the robbery or the felonious assault. And all they had on us was the Sullivan Act. And for that the judge slapped a \$7,500 bail bond on us. He didn't like it because I laughed, and he said that; he said he was setting such a high bond on us because he wanted us in the House of D. He didn't want us at home and he didn't want us going any place. I called him a rotten bastard. And that made me famous, you know. After the grapevine brought it back to the House of D., all the girls wanted to see me. They all wanted to see who I was. And once I hit the prison, I got all these kites, all these messages from the girls on other cell blocks, offering me swag if I'd go to bed with them, make love."

## 8

### I Love You, Baby, for Cigarettes and Candy

The Rusty Brickers, the major leaguers in the prison, are important in the House of Detention—to the administration, to the staff, to the other worshipful, apish, competitive, and especially terrified inmates who don't dare call their souls their own in their presence—out of all proportion to their numbers. To understand the reason, we must understand, also, the strange hierarchical system of the prison. The Molly McGuires and Bertha, Cindy, and Cora May Greens and Joyce Kranjewskis are, as they themselves point out, at the bottom of the heap. Thieves are on a higher level, according to the seriousness of their crimes, and forgers on an even higher one. Abortionists may be more or less highly regarded depending on how successful they are. The poor ones are mocked at

and the wealthy ones catered to. Narcotics distributors, the few who ever reach the House of Detention, are enormously catered to by admiring and opportunistic inmates, who hope to make use of them. Call girls, even rarer in the prison than narcotics distributors, are objects of curiosity.

But the Rusty Brickers, as Rusty hastens to point out, are even more respected in the prison than the call girls and narcotics distributors. And it is not only because they are homosexuals; some are, of course, but some are not. It is also, and primarily, because they are psychopathic women with the colossal egos of their kind. Two or three psychopaths out of five hundred can do harm out of all proportion to their number. Whether they are on sentence or detention floors, they can and do become masters of the prison during their periods of incarceration. The psychopathic inmates, "rebels without a cause, agitators without slogans, revolutionaries without programs," according to Dr. Robert M. Lindner, who conducted the only successful analysis so far of a criminal psychopath, are the banes of existence of the administrators, staff, and even the inmates who are not "in" people because the Rusty Brickers dictate that they cannot be.

Actually, Warden Lindsay is extremely worried by the persistent verbal abuse the officers must take from the Rusty Brickers, and she is tormented by the knowledge that there is no predicting where, when, how, and with what degree of fury and ferocity an officer may be physically attacked.

If the psychopaths in the prison were deliberately setting out to rule the prison by dividing and conquering staff and administration, they couldn't be more effective. Officers who otherwise sympa-

thize with Warden Lindsay and the other policy-makers cannot countenance them for "letting us down, not backing us up, causing the girls to believe that they have the upper hand—which they do."

Anyone who believes that there is no gray in the relationship between inmates and officers—that the officers are all black and the inmates all white in their dealings—could never have met a Rusty Bricker face to face. Anyone who has once heard Rusty talk about the officers she's in a position to victimize and exploit must pity the officers. If the powerless prisoners are brutalized, as some are, by aggressive, sadistic officers, so are some officers demoralized and perverted by all they must tolerate from the Rustys.

"When I first came to work here fourteen years ago," gentle-voiced Mrs. Anne Levine says, "I wanted to be a good officer; you can say I wanted to go beyond the call of duty. Now, though, having had to submit to all I have from the prisoners and being frightened of them and knowing that I won't be backed up against them, I don't care any more. I work for my paycheck, not for humanity."

Andena Reid, an old-time officer, talks longingly about "the old days when the officers had the authority and the girls, they knew that if they slapped you, they'd get slapped twenty times as hard." She admits, when she's pressed, that the unmanageable inmates were no more pliant when discipline was retaliatory than they are today, but insists she functioned more easily in the other climate.

To the Rusty Brickers, their domination over the jail seems a well-deserved personal triumph.

They control the officers and the inmates because they are "better people," basically more intelligent. And they would seem to be more intelligent to anyone who holds shrewdness and secretive cunning and calculating canniness to be components of intelligence. Certainly, psychopaths like Rusty are sufficiently well endowed with these attributes so they can serve their own psychopathic ends even in prison.

The "racket" in the House of Detention, in its simplest sense—the sense in which outsiders who are not part of the leadership hierarchy know it—is defined by Rusty's femme, Patricia, as she knew it before she became the sophisticate she is today and while she was new under Rusty's wing.

"Well, I was so dumb when I first hit the House of D.," she says. "Really, I don't know how I would have done my time without Rusty. It would have been awful never having anything except what they said in the prison you were supposed to have. Doing time like that is doing it the hard way, you know, I mean, you never have anything."

"Especially if you're on the detention floor or even on a short bust or sentence."

"Well, let's suppose I don't know Rusty and I'm in on a short bust. Let's say I'm in for ninety days. So I don't have a bathrobe. Ninety-day girls and sixty-day girls don't get bathrobes. You've got to be in the jail six months before they give you a bathrobe. You go to your shower in your nightgown or your dress. You can catch pneumonia in the wintertime because it gets pretty cold, but you can't get a bathrobe unless you're doing six months or more. . . . Now, the only way you can get a bathrobe if you're not doing six months is to ask

one of your friends who works in the laundry to bring one up to you. But I didn't know that till Rusty showed me."

"And the sweaters they give you are all full of holes. The wool's wearing so thin on them they're not even any kind of a protection against the cold. You might as well not be wearing a sweater."

"But Rusty always wore gorgeous new sweaters. So I asked her once, before she and I became so close, I asked her how come her sweaters were so different from other people's, and she didn't say anything, but I saw her 'playing' with a girl, Fran, who worked in the clothing room. And then she introduced me to Fran. She said she wanted us to know each other because we were both 'good people.' Then neither of us said anything more. But Fran looked at my sweater and she said, 'Good people don't have to wear sweaters like that, Patricia.' That's all. And then, after Recreation, when I went back to my cell, I found this sweater on my bed."

"So Rusty told me, 'All you have to do is to be in with the people who can get you what you want. There's always somebody who can and so there's no reason not to have what you want in the jail.' And I saw what she meant when I wanted some bleach one time. And, you know, I'd been wanting it and I'd asked the officers and the girls and everyone whether I couldn't get it, and they looked at me like I was crazy. And a couple of them, especially the officers, even acted like I was. They'd say things like 'You want bleach? Bleach, in a penitentiary?'

"But I'd see some girls washing their clothes, and though I never saw them use bleach, I knew

they had it because I'd smell it. And one time my panties were yellow because I only had two pairs, you know, and I kept thinking how nice it would be if I could bleach them white. And when I went to do my wash, I could smell bleach and I knew somebody else had had some just before me and the idea just bugged me, so I ran down the hall yelling, 'I want bleach. I want bleach.' And this officer came up to me and said I'd better quit my yelling or I'd get deadlock instead of bleach. So I quit my yelling."

Patricia says that then she went to the sewing factory where she worked, "the next thing I knew, here's Rusty walking in, even though she didn't work there and wasn't supposed to be there. And next thing, in front of the officer, she grabs this big, heavy butch who's always in the House doing a lot of time and's got connections for everything and sends the girl into the bathroom. The butch comes out carrying a big plastic bottle and puts it underneath her sweater.

"And Rusty is something else. I heard her telling the girl, 'I'm not going to boost it back to my cell. You boost it back for me.'

"The girl said, 'All right. But this is a big bottle to boost any place. Can't I give you a little bottle?'

"Rusty said, 'No. I want the big bottle. I need it.'

"I was dying of curiosity so I asked Rusty what was in the bottle and she gave me a look, 'You stupid bastard, to talk when you ought to keep your mouth shut and not to see what was right under your eyes.' I didn't dig the bottle had bleach in it, though, until that night when Rusty gave me a jar full of bleach while we were out on the corridor.

She didn't say a word. She just came in with a jar full of bleach and put it by my chair. . . . So that's the story of how I got bleach at the House of D.

"Rusty got me a douche bag too. I needed a vaginal douche and I couldn't get one. When I came in the House it was on my medical chart that I needed one but I couldn't get it to save my life. I kept going to the clinic and begging for a vaginal douche every day. And all they told me was they were putting me on the list for gyn consultation. I don't know how many weeks passed and I still was on a list and didn't have my douche. I begged the same way as I did with the bleach. I screamed at the officer, 'Look, what do you do if you need a douche? Do I have to go out on the roof and scream it all over Greenwich Avenue? What do I have to do?' The officer said, 'We told the nurse.' I said, 'So?' She said, 'So, when she lets us know, we'll let you know.' I said, 'When will that be?' And she said, 'What do you want, lady, a written guarantee? Well, I'm not going to give you one, and if you want to scream all over Greenwich Avenue, go scream and get deadlocked for it. I can do okay without you on this corridor.'

"The next morning here comes Rusty into the sewing room where I work. She's carrying a package wrapped in brown paper. She comes by my sewing machine and doesn't say a word. She just puts the package down. It's my douche bag, naturally.

In the House of Detention, the "hustle," the "racket," is closely intertwined with the patterns of homosexuality and the homosexual hierarchy in the institution. For the homosexuals, through their contacts with inmates and some officers who work

in the kitchen, dining room, laundry, clothing room, commissary, and the infirmary, control all the goods and services that can make inmates' time in the jail more bearable than it otherwise would be. Homosexuals who work in the kitchen (and the hierarchy sees to it that homosexuals are properly represented there) and the dining room "boost" food for themselves and their friends. And as Patricia pointed out, through their contacts in the clothing room, laundry, and sewing factory, the "good people" are much better dressed than ordinary prisoners. The "good people" have available to them supplies of such luxuries as candy, cigarettes, cosmetics, and even bologna, salami, and Italian bread. The best contacts of all, though, are the homosexual inmates employed in and around the infirmary, who are in a position to smuggle out tranquilizers and other narcotics.

The "racket," except in rare instances, is organized and controlled by the most masculine-oriented among the women, "bulldykes" or "stud broads" like Rusty, who are practicing homosexuals in the world outside the jail. The "stud broads," when they are outside the institution, often "mac" it or dress in men's clothes.

Rusty Bricker and the other confirmed lesbians are, on the whole, mistrustful and contemptuous of jailhouse turnouts. Being old-timers and well versed in prisoner and prison psychology, they know, within themselves, that many "turned out" femme inmates, no matter how seriously in love they are with women while they are in the jail, will revert back to heterosexuality once men come on their horizon again.

Actually, some jailhouse turnouts are so moved

by the sexuality they experience in jail that they change their sexual patterns after they leave jail. This is particularly true among the few inmates who turn out to be bulldykes instead of femmes. Some of them, like twenty-nine-year-old Florence Somers, actually "discover" themselves in the jail.

"It's a funny thing," Florence says, "I've been married six times and I'm a prostitute. I've grown to hate men. I don't know. I couldn't say the word 'man' without wanting to spit. To me, ever since I could remember, a man was the lowest, filthiest, foulest thing on earth. Yet here I am playing the character of a man. I came into that place and I met Josette and wanted to take care of her and be a man to her. She believes that now, but she didn't use to.

It may be hard to believe when you see and talk with the confirmed bulldykes, generally acting arrogant and overbearing, but the truth is that they may be as touching and pathetic in their needs that can never be satisfied as the turned-out femmes who revolve around them and would seem, until you know the whole of the enigmatic story of homosexuality in the jail, to be their victims. In some ways, the bulldykes, except for psychopaths like Rusty, are more sinned against than sinning toward the femmes, who use the bulldykes' masqueradings to aid in fantasies which make their time in jail easier and then discard them when they can function again without the fantasies.

But if the majority of bulldykes are at least as much victims as the femmes, the minority of bulldykes who are also psychopaths, like Rusty, are far from being victims. It is because of them that homosexuality in the House of Detention (despite

the compassion one must feel for many of its participants) must be watched for and worried over as one of the most reprehensible practices to which some new inmates in the jail are exposed. For the Rusty Brickers can—and sometimes do—hurt their “turned-out femmes” irreparably. The femmes may be ruined for a life of heterosexuality because, whether or not we like to admit it, the colorful Rustys have a fascination that drab women, like the majority of those who land in the House of Detention, find hard to resist. They may be hurt physically because the Rusty Brickers in the House of Detention have no compunction about using primitive and violent methods to achieve relationships with the inmates they want.

And they can certainly be hurt psychically by knowing themselves to be in the psychopath's power, and feeling, with justification, unfortunately, that there is no one in or even out of the jail to whom they can turn for help. They are so intimidated by the Rustys, who keep them silent with threats of vengeance, that they won't dare talk. Certainly they won't talk to the staff inside the prison, often including the psychiatrists and social workers.

“I know very little about homosexuality in the House,” the doctor says thoughtfully, “because the inmates won't talk to me about it. They steer away from it whenever I approach them. Another element that precludes their taking me into their confidence is that the only ones I ever see are those who are depressed or suicidal, perhaps because they've lost their lovers. Depressed and suicidal patients are not very communicative. They wouldn't be communicative whether or not there

were elements of their relationships they didn't want to share with me. And, as I say, I never see the 'healthy homosexuals.' I call them 'healthy homosexuals' for want of a better name. Perhaps I should say I never see the 'adjusted' homosexuals."

It is an important fact, also, that the generally accepted “inmate code” at the House of Detention would serve to keep the Rustys safe from staff knowledge. The principal means of control (aside, of course, from their own violent methods of assuring their safety) is the code prohibition against giving any information, even the most trivial, to staff.

Even first-timers who have been on short sentence, or who have been detained for only a few days while awaiting trial, know how serious is “snitching” or “ratting.” In fact, the more innocent prisoners, the ones who might be inclined to talk if anyone was, are more fearful than the others because they believe what they've seen in prison movies where “rats” and “snitchers” are always punished by horrible deaths. Although the punishments in the House of Detention, inflicted as they generally are by the psychopaths, cannot be predicted from one instance to another, past experience would indicate that they're never as severe as the younger prisoners conceive them.

The older and more hardened prisoners, the ones not so terrified by severe retaliation, know that it can be severe enough and aren't about to risk it in order to gain favor with the officers, diagnostic staff, or administration. If punishment doesn't deter them, then a desire to be regarded as strong, despite being in prison, does. As important as loyalty, at least to the older and more secure prisoner,

is her feeling that never, no matter what, should she be overly friendly with officers. Her behavior and approach toward them must be that all she wants them to do for her is to leave her alone. To "snitch" or "rat" is the epitome of weakness. What, after all, is snitching except subservience and being a sucker?

And talking to members of the diagnostic staff is, in its way, being a worse sucker than talking to staff. Because psychiatrists and social workers, no matter how they may pretend to sympathize and understand, are as much tools of the Establishment as the officers are. And when they "butter you up," their main motive is to lead you into making admissions they can later use against you and every prisoner.

"No," Rusty says, with profound assurance when asked whether inmates would reveal any of the secrets of the homosexual racket, "no, of course they wouldn't." And adds, with complete lack of self-consciousness, "The screws'd try not to hear them if they did. They don't want to hear. They don't because if they did, they could see for themselves and wouldn't need anyone to tell them. They wouldn't need the girls to tell them anything. Because what goes on is open, so anybody can see it and they can too. Like, if I wanted to hold a femme's hand, I hold it right out in the dining room, and nobody tells me don't. And one time I held this femme's hand that didn't want me to. And she kept taking her hand away. And I kept bringing it back into my lap. And this officer was right there. She saw me too.

"And then, in Recreation, one time, I made a square broad, she wasn't just square, she was mar-

ried, right under the officer's nose. Her name was Eloise."

"Now, as I say, that officer who was on duty all those nights I kept sucking up to Eloise could have stopped me making her. Because she knew what was going on. The officers all know what's going on in the racket, but they don't stop you anyhow. Because some are gay themselves. And others are too damn weak and sick to stand up to you."

# 9

## Who Takes Care of the Caretaker?

Rusty Bricker, being more sophisticated, is fairer to the staff than most inmates. She is one of the few women who recognizes that officers may tolerate homosexuality out of fear of its leaders rather than because they themselves are lesbians. Most inmates who aren't so knowing, however—particularly those who are not affiliates of the racket—believe that everything the officers do that reveals a tolerance of the racket is done because they are themselves overt lesbians.

If you listened to a majority of the prison women, you would think there was not a sexually normal officer in the whole House of Detention. Although it is certainly not true that everyone so accused is a lesbian, anyone who has given any thought to the subject realizes that some officers doubtless are. This place they have chosen to work

in is, in the last analysis, manless, and so if their interests and feelings had not been centered on women, whether overtly or not, they—at least those among them capable of earning similar salaries elsewhere—might not have elected to come here at all.

Despite what they say about their officers, there are few House of Detention women who claim to have had actual relationships with them. They talk about friends and friends of friends who were in the House of Detention three, four, ten years ago, who were intimate with officers. And what they say, when you pin them down, is that, three years ago, an officer I call Knocky Nelson had an affair with an inmate I call Lucky Lopez and went further in her lesbianism, although she was an officer, than many inmates would have gone.

The true story of the relationship of Knocky Nelson and Lucky Lopez, rare though such relationships are, is consequential to this book for two reasons. First, the inmates have created a legend around Knocky and Lucky to demonstrate their thesis about lesbianism and the House of Detention officers. Second, it is illustrative of the terrifying power such virile and vigorous psychopaths as Rusty Bricker or Lucky Lopez exercise when, in a place like the House of Detention, they are permitted to function freely in the midst of strengthless, debilitated women, whether they are inmates like Joyce, Bertha, Cora May, Cindy, and Molly McGuire or officers like luckless Knocky Nelson.

I first met Knocky through Rusty. She looked to me, until I came to know her, like any hopelessly addicted inmate out of the House of Detention, sick, weak, unreachable, and altogether unable to

delve into herself. She turned out to be entirely opposite to what I'd conceived her—a lost person, admittedly, but nevertheless wise and rational about people, including herself. "I guess," she said, the first time Rusty and I went to see her in her dingy furnished room in East Harlem, "that, although I was an officer, I am as much a weak sister as any of the inmates are. Of course, you know I don't mean inmates like Rusty." She smiled at Rusty who smiled back in acknowledgement of the compliment. She said, "Well, you know, most of the inmates of the House of D. had tragic childhoods and that's one reason why they ended as they did. Well, my childhood was as tragic as that of the inmates. They didn't overcome their childhood tragedies, and although it seemed for a while that I did, I didn't either."

Knocky was ten going on eleven when she was declared a neglected child, taken away from her mother, and sent to the Lowell School in upstate New York. It was supported by Baptist Church women and prided itself on its "missionary-type teachers who live and work among the colored children in our school." The high brick wall at the Lowell School make it look like a prison from outside. There was a small door in the wall. The New York City social worker who had brought Knocky there rang the bell. An elderly woman, fat, clumsy, and untidily dressed, came out and showed Knocky and the social worker into the waiting room; it was filled with massive, ugly furniture. The Superintendent of the Lowell School, Miss Granner, came into the room. She was at least six feet tall and broad, with enormous hands and red-gray hair. She

talked loudly in a jovial manner; but her aggressive cheerfulness terrified Knocky.

The door opened and a woman, about forty, dark, with black hair parted in the middle, a small round nose, and curiously thick lips, came in. There was a singular coldness in her manner. She didn't smile when the Superintendent introduced her as Mrs. White and said she was the matron in charge of Knocky's dormitory.

"Follow me," Mrs. White said. "I'll show you around." She took Knocky into the schoolroom, a large, bare room with two tables that ran along its whole length, and out to the playground with high brick walls on three sides and on the fourth side an iron railing through which you saw a small, scraggly lawn and beyond this some of the cottages in which Lowell School students were housed. A girl of about nine, dressed in a navy skirt and middy blouse, was wandering disconsolately, kicking up the gravel as she walked.

"Hi, Jane," Mrs. White called. "Here's a new girl come to live with us. I'll leave her with you."

Jane stared at Knocky out of wide eyes.

"What's the matter with your foot?"

Knocky instinctively tried to withdraw her shorter foot from sight. She hid it behind the longer one.

"One of my feet's shorter."

"Let me see."

"No."

"You scared or something, cripple?" Jane accompanied her words with a sharp kick against Knocky's shin.

Then other girls arrived, twelve altogether. A large broad girl who seemed a little older than

Knocky introduced herself as Marian. A few other girls followed Marian and began talking to Knocky. She was shy and nervous with these children, all healthy and whole-looking, none with any kind of infirmity. She tried to make herself pleasant, but she could not think of anything to say.

All the children looked down at Knocky's foot.

Knocky Nelson says that, as time went on, her deformity ceased to be of interest, that the children began to accept it. But not before she had grown exceedingly sensitive. She stood still as much as she could with her left leg thrust behind her right. Because she didn't engage in any of the girls' games, their life remained strange to her; she only interested herself in the outside from their doings, and it seemed to her that there was a barrier between her and them.

Time passed and Knocky was almost fourteen and graduating from the Lowell School's elementary school. Feeling lonely and isolated, she'd become a voracious reader and an excellent student. She'd taken English and History medals and expected to be valedictorian at her graduation. She had developed a good relationship with both Miss Granner, the Lowell School superintendent, and the dormitory matron she'd once considered so cold. Through them, she had become a very devout Baptist. Every night she prayed to God to cure her of her crippled foot. And her prayer was answered. Because she had "faith to move mountains," as Miss Granner and Mrs. White said of her, God "interjected Himself into my life. . . . The Baptist Women—Miss Granner talked to them about me—took up a collection to send me, when I graduated from school, to Mount Sinai Hospital for an opera-

tion. I was there two weeks and when I left the hospital, I walked like anybody....

Knocky could have gone home when she graduated from elementary school if it hadn't been for the fact that her father's whereabouts were still unknown and her mother had gone from bad to worse. She was a vagrant as well as a prostitute. So Knocky stayed on at the Lowell School, attending the high school in town and helping the matrons with the younger children. She passed her next four years in uncomfortable monotony, working hard at the Lowell School, making good grades in the high school, but having little or nothing to do with the other high school students. She read. . . . Books filled her mind with ideas which gave scope to her imagination.

After she graduated from high school, Knocky worked at the Lowell School for almost five years. She grew more religious with the years. There were times, after the children she oversaw were in bed, when she was seized with a mystical rapture, and she wanted to surrender herself entirely to God—to be a missionary in His behalf, perhaps. She forgot, during the time of her religious rapture, her longing for an earthier life, for contact with other people, for love even.

Sometimes, though, religion wasn't enough to keep Knocky from becoming gloomy. She was wasting her youth here at the Lowell School (and youth doesn't last forever, after all), throwing her life away. There was not a soul around for her to talk to except the elderly matrons who hadn't been too interesting when she was a child. There were the long winter evenings when the wind blew, whistling drearily through the leafless trees, and all

around you saw nothing but the monotony of snow packed so high you couldn't go out in it. There was nothing but grueling hard work that was never finished—children needed you on nights and weekends as well as during the eight-hour weekdays—and the pay was certainly not adequate to anyone's needs. All the matrons lived in poverty, but it was all right for them. The Lowell School, after all, was the best life had to offer them. They were narrow and eccentric. They were strange with their long years at the Lowell School. Knocky, contemplating them, shivered at the thought of leading such a life so long that no other would be available to her. She wanted to go out into the world.

She dipped into the savings she'd accumulated while living in at the Lowell School and rented a room in an interracial boardinghouse near Columbia University. Most of the other boarders were young students, freshmen at Columbia, and elderly schoolteachers who were depressingly like many of the matrons at the Lowell School.

Three days after she first came to New York, Knocky got a job as a clerk in an import-export house. Her boss, Mr. Collins, was a thin man, much below medium height, with sandy hair and prominent, pale eyes. He was a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Knocky was one of three clerks he'd employed primarily because they were Blacks. He said he hoped Knocky would like the work; there was a good deal of drudgery about it, but when you got used to it, it wasn't quite as boring as some jobs became with familiarity; and one made money, that was the important thing, wasn't it?

Knocky met the other clerks, mostly teen-age

girls recently graduated from high school. But both white and Black girls were breezy, casual, offhand, secure in their companionship with each other. They talked about dates and clothes and hair styles, subjects on which Knocky had little to contribute. They dressed colorfully and loudly, and Knocky, sitting among them, felt like the proverbial brown wren. Nobody went to particular trouble to cultivate her and she was too shy to go out of her way to them. So, as it had been in the high school, she blended, soon after she came to work, into a kind of insignificance. She talked to no one on the job and to few people in the boardinghouse. The students were too occupied with their own activities and the elderly ladies kept to themselves. Knocky used to try to read in her room at night, but she was depressed because now she knew herself to be really alone as she'd never quite been in the Lowell School.

About six months after she came to New York, Knocky, having taken a Civil Service examination for city prison officer, was high on the list of appointments to be made to the House of Detention for Women.

On March 4, 1963, Knocky Nelson dressed in her trim, navy blue Correction Officer's uniform with the stiffly starched shirt and the smart-looking tie, and rode herself up in the jail elevator to Floor Seven, her work assignment on the four-to-twelve P.M. shift. Her colleague was an old-time officer with a round, chubby face "like an old beachball and tiny red mudeyes." She sat with her fat legs unself-consciously sprawled in the center corridor on the seventh floor and motioned Knocky to take the chair beside her.

She boomed: "I am Rita Malone!"

The way she can help Knocky best, Rita Malone says, is that she can tell her what all the girls on this seventh floor are like. She knows them all and nobody fools her. She's got the girls on this floor eating out of her hand. As soon as a new girl comes in she tells her who's who and what's what. She tells the inmates she'll be fair and square with them so long as they treat her the same way. But if they're not fair with her, she won't be with them either. If they bug her, she can have them deadlocked. And she'll do it. And when they're let out of deadlock, she'll send them back in again.

Knocky, in her early days as an officer, was sufficiently identified with the jail rather than the inmates so that she constantly stopped the pretty, scrubbed-face kid, Anita Daire, nicknamed Teddy Bare, from performing her highly suggestible "dance" for the inmates. It wasn't till much later that Knocky discovered herself to be as moved as the inmates by Teddy Bare's act—by the way Teddy Bare's hands edged toward the hypnotic spot between the legs where all the inmates' eyes were riveted, rested there caressingly, hips momentarily magnetized, suddenly released, swinging sex around.

If you're trying to blame someone else for your being what you're fated to be, Knocky says, then Lucky Lopez is responsible for having changed her from an officer into an inmate—worse than an inmate. . . . There was something about Lucky. Her face, from the time Knocky first saw her, stood out among the tough young hood faces and the tough old outcast faces. She looked, with her skin

stretched taut over broad facial muscles and her hair cut short as a man's, like a dark James Dean. She talked with zest and enthusiasm and an assurance (at least outwardly) Knocky envied. She talked colorfully about her past life. She said she was born restless. She never could stay in school when she was a kid, not even when she went there in the morning with the best of intentions.

Lucky didn't grow up around the streets of New York the way many of the girls at the House of Detention did. She grew up in a small town in the West, and then when she was, oh, just a kid, she got tired of home. She knew she had to leave. She knew. Like something calling you. Her old lady, she'd died long ago. There were five in the family, all sisters but brought up as tough as boys—and Lucky's father. So she told her father one day when she was fifteen years old, "I am going to leave town, go somewhere else." He was good about it. He didn't say: "Don't go, wait"—or anything. He just looked at Lucky and nodded, understanding. Then he asked her when she was leaving. She told him tomorrow. And he said, "Well then, tonight we are going to go places, you and me."

Lucky's father had an old Ford and he drove Lucky all over town in it. They went to a bar and Lucky's father ordered a couple of straight whiskies and he said, "We are going to have one good drunk because if you'd been born a boy instead of a girl, I'd've had you out drinking before this."

Lucky and her father got so drunk that after they left the bar and were standing outside, he pointed to a house and said, "Whore house, Lucky." And he took Lucky's arm and brought her

right into the front room of that house of prostitution and told her to wait downstairs while he went up with one of the whores. And there was this cute whore there, she wasn't any young chick exactly, but she pulled Lucky up the stairs with her and took her to bed. And that, says Lucky, was the last time in her life she ever played femme and let anybody give up the work to her. From that day on, she knew herself to be a dyke and she was the one who gave the work up to other girls.

By the time Lucky came down from the prostitute's room, her father was sitting in the living room waiting for her. He said, "Okay?" Lucky said, "Fine, Pa, fine." Then Lucky and her father went into another bar and drank more straight whiskey. "I'm going to teach you right," Lucky's father kept telling her.

Lucky hitchhiked into New York the day after she and her father had their fling on the town. The man who gave her the ride said, "Where to, sweetie?" Lucky said, "New York." And the man said, "Hi-o, New York." They went to a motel and the man said they'd stay there overnight and he even took separate rooms for them. Lucky was exhausted and, as she says, "Even today, when I sleep, I sleep." . . . In the morning when she woke up, the man kept saying he was sorry for what happened, that it was the first time he'd ever made a kid and he was sorry. Lucky didn't know what he was talking about until even a baby would have known what the score was; he kept on talking and he didn't even know Lucky had slept the whole time. So Lucky asked him to give her some money, but he wouldn't do it. And she got angry and slashed

him with his own knife and found herself in a reform school in Pennsylvania.

Knocky doesn't know when Lucky ceased being another inmate and became the most colorful, the most intriguing, the most fascinating person in her otherwise drab life. She was like a character out of the novels Knocky had read during her early days at the Lowell School. She seemed, even in jail, to have the only things that made life worth living—pride in self, love (to Knocky who'd never related to a single person in her whole life, Lucky's sordid sexual affairs appear love-inspired), and companionship. She seemed not even to know what loneliness was and so Knocky was bound to be enthralled by her.

Lucky came on to Knocky's floor after Knocky had been working at the House of Detention for seven months. Knocky was regarded, at that time, as a fine, even dedicated officer with a good potential for success. Lucky had been transferred to Knocky's floor from the sixth floor. She came with four others, and one night the five of them were sprawled on the floor—it was Recreation time—and Knocky passed them and Lucky "made a thing" out of coyly peeping under her skirt.

"Hey, officer," Lucky said, "I don't know your name. What is it?"

"Nelson."

"I mean your first name."

Knocky "knew that officers weren't supposed to give inmates our first names but—I don't know—already then, I didn't think of Lucky as an inmate. I told her Knocky. And it was funny—the girls sitting with her began laughing and kidding me about my name."

"'Jocky, did you say? Is your name Jocky?'

"'No. It's Knocky.'

"'Oh! Pocky!'

"'Not Pocky! Knocky!'" Knocky laughed and so did everyone. Lucky summoned Knocky to join her friends on the floor and she sat down in spite of the baldly disapproving look on Rita Malone's face. Lucky and her friends continued the conversation they'd been holding before Knocky came. They talked of a thousand things—of "tricks" and how to interest them, of narcotics and where to "cop" it, of the floors in the specialty and department stores which were easiest to steal from. They gossiped about other inmates on their corridors, vituperatively and violently. They used a peculiar imagery Knocky had never been exposed to before to emphasize their ribald scorn. All the names they mentioned were, of course, unfamiliar to Knocky but she listened attentively anyhow. That night, she thinks now upon reflection, was "the beginning of the end, the beginning of my downfall. I began looking on the inmates as my friends and myself as less than their equal."

Knocky says her time on the corridor flew. Later, after the inmates, including Lucky, were locked in their cells, Knocky took her proper place again on the chair beside Rita Malone. She says Rita looked at her as though she was some repulsive animal and said: "It looks like you enjoy the inmates more than the officers."

Knocky flinched. She said, "Well, I don't know those girls and I thought it was important to get to know them."

Rita Malone said, "You're wasting your time

talking to them. Take my advice, don't have anything to do with them. I'm telling you because it's my duty. Stay away from that Lucky."

Knocky say she honestly tried to stay away from Lucky and her group but that she felt irresistibly drawn to them from the beginning. Only with these women, out of everyone she'd ever met, could she be giving and affable because not fearful of rebuff. Only with them could she hope to attain the popularity she'd always desired above everything. . . .

Knocky and Lucky began spending many nights on Recreation, keeping as apart from the other women as they could. They'd sit and talk together by the hour or, rather, Lucky would talk and Knocky would listen. Bragging, exaggerating her "big scores" on the outside, Lucky would tell of the women with whom she'd been and how well she'd satisfied all of them.

And one night Lucky held Knocky against a more or less inconspicuous wall of the Recreation room and pretended she was a police officer frisking her. "The fuzz frisks you like this, Knocky." She let her hands slide intimately between Knocky's legs until Knocky could hardly breathe, and then, once she'd gauged her effect, she asked, "Is this kicks, baby? Huh, is it? Is this kicks or is it kicks?" She prevailed upon Knocky, without too much urging, to open a darkened shower room and sneak in there with her. She slipped out of her clothes in an instant and then undressed Knocky. After they made love, she asked—it was the first and last time she ever worried about Knocky—"Are you all right now, baby? Was it good? Did I make you happy, man?"

After their "first time together," Knocky often unlocked the shower room for Lucky and herself and no longer at Lucky's urging. Knocky wanted Lucky constantly. She'd become excited merely at the sight of Lucky on nighttime Recreation and only became surfeited after they'd been together in the shower room two, three times. The inmates soon recognized Knocky as Lucky's femme. So did officer Malone, who issued her a dire warning.

One night, after Knocky and Lucky had been intimate for some time, a new young girl was assigned to Floor Seven. She was perhaps seventeen or eighteen years old and very pretty in the overly tight garment. She smiled as she walked by Lucky and Knocky, coy, aware of her attractiveness to all the bull-dykes on the corridor, including Lucky. She walked over to where a couple of inmates were playing cards and bent over, ostensibly to see somebody's hand. She stayed bent a long time, casting surreptitious glances at Knocky and Lucky—to see her effect upon them. Then, shaking her hair which was vibrantly blond and long to her shoulders, she straightened up and stood in posed bewilderment, as if wondering where she would go next.

"Oh, man," Lucky said, jumping up from the floor. "Oh, man!" And pushing her hand toward her mannish-cut hair, she walked toward the girl who was slowly making her way out of the Recreation corridor and back to her cell.

And what of Knocky Nelson? She went on sitting on the corridor and smiling at all the inmates and at Rita Malone, whenever they caught her eye. Inside of her, though, she was miserable; this was

it, Lucky would be leaving her, and she'd commit suicide because life wouldn't be of any use to her.

Rita Malone asked, "What the hell's wrong with you, Knocky? Look, if you'd listened to me instead of fraternizing with the inmates, I could have warned you about Lucky Lopez, she's one of the most dangerous people to know in this prison. You should have seen her during her last bust—the inmates, and also my colleague before you got here, were all hung up on her. Well! She's trash! All the inmates are trash! Officers shouldn't socialize with inmates if you don't mind my giving you a piece of advice because I'm older and wiser in the ways of this prison than you are. Now listen to me, I've been around much longer than you and I know what I'm saying—don't give up your claim to dignity, whatever else you do, by socializing with the inmates. I told you but you wouldn't listen to me, oh no."

Sometimes when she was away from her, it seemed impossible that Knocky should be in love with Lucky. Lucky was a criminal and besides she was mean and insolent. Knocky remembered how insulting Lucky could be and thought how she'd like to hit her, to beat her. And each time she was seized by an uprush of emotion. She yearned for Lucky. She thought of being in Lucky's arms, of feeling her thin, wiry body against her own. She wanted to kiss Lucky's mouth, to pass her fingers down her face. She wanted her.

One Saturday afternoon a week after the young girl—Eloise Reiber was her name—had first appeared on Knocky's floor, Knocky saw Lucky and Eloise, arms clasped around each other's waists, walking toward the corridor in which Lucky's cell

was located. Her heart sank as she watched them go, and as soon as she could decently do so, she followed them. When she came on to the cell block, she saw two of Lucky's trusted friends standing squarely in front of her cell and shading from view all that went on. They refused to move away from the cell when she ordered them to. When Lucky came out of the cell and back on to the Recreation corridor, Knocky told her she "was through, finished, and I didn't want any more to do with her. . . . Then come tomorrow night, and she asks me to go into the shower room with her. And I went. And, you know, she gave up Eloise for me or they had a fight—but Eloise was out of our lives. So Lucky and I made it together every night until her time was up and then I knew I couldn't give her up. I wanted to make it with her on the outside."

All this happened within perhaps a week. . . .

Knocky was with Lucky in The Bird in Hand in Harlem—a huge, dirty "gay bar" with harsh lights and ornamented with faded travel posters from Italian and Japanese airlines—when a skinny, drunk, black-faced femme perched like a crow on a stool next to Lucky and began stroking her. Knocky, watching, turned in fury, ready to slap her. The woman hurled her beer at Knocky in a stream. Knocky slapped her and she fell off her stool. A police officer in uniform came and took Knocky and the woman to the police station, booked them both on charges of disorderly conduct. Knocky, on trial, received a suspended sentence, but the Department of Correction heard about the incident and issued her a stern warning. Two days later, Knocky was again arrested for dis-

orderly conduct—another fight in another “gay bar” with another femme who was interested in Lucky. This time a surly Department of Correction official said, “You’re wearing our patience a little thin.”

Knocky was fired, finally, after she stole, forged, and cashed a check made out to another officer in the House of Detention. “I knew I had to get caught,” she says, “but when I did it, I wasn’t thinking about tomorrow or anything except getting some money Lucky had to have. I couldn’t help it.” Knocky says Lucky is an obsession with her; she’s a slave to Lucky. They fight and she tells Lucky she doesn’t want anything more to do with her and Lucky shrugs her shoulders and says, “Suit yourself, man.” And then Knocky cries and begs Lucky to forgive her. She’s glad to lie down on the ground for Lucky to walk over. . . . But today, Lucky doesn’t even walk over her. Lucky doesn’t want her now that she’s a cheap prostitute with an oil-burning junk habit. She taunts her by saying, “You’re just a screw, man; it’s all you are and all you’ll be. . . .” And she tells her she’s a fool ever to have fallen for her or any other bulldyke king in the House of Detention. She tells her that she and other dyke kings, the dykes who matter, that is, use femmes like her—who get all involved in sex and fall in love and want to live happily ever after like squares—to advance their own ends, and it’s a pity that the femmes don’t know it. It’s a pity that the femmes don’t know that sex is a racket in the prison. And she says, along with Rusty, that “jerked-up femmes” like Knocky Nelson don’t belong outside, that they deserve to spend the rest

of their lives in the House of Detention, “hellhole” though it is, because “they’re too weak and sick to live on the outside.”

## 10

I Mean, What Am I Supposed To Do?  
Go Down to City Hall and Cry  
on the Mayor's Shoulder?

Lucky Lopez' strange kind of "justice," her belief that because the mass of prisoners are "too weak and sick to live on the outside" they deserve no better fate than a lifetime in the House of Detention, is in line with her psychopathy. And unfortunately, the citizens of New York and their elected representatives, through their inaction over the years, have done as Lucky would have them do. They have helped condemn the inmates, unaided and unrehabilitated after their numerous sentences, to what would seem a lifetime of passing back and forth through the revolving doors of the House of Detention. They have known of the evils of the prison and, sometimes, been passionately angered by them. More often, though, they've

closed their eyes. Periodically, there have been investigations: the first one in 1942, eight years after the prison's opening; the last one in 1965, and three others between those years. All the investigations were called for, in heat and passion, by knowledgeable, philosophical, but indignant citizens with a conscience who became aroused, as James A. Wechsler did after hearing Andrea Dworkin's record of her five days, to demand exploration and action. Mr. Wechsler, in his March 8, 1965 column in the *New York Post*, entitled "Who Sinned?" stated:

" . . . So let there be a full, public airing of this wretched episode before an independent tribunal. With due respect for the dedication of Anna Kross, these charges are more than a departmental matter. One may say that the original sin rests with the judge who sent these girls (Andrea and Lisa Goldrosen) into that place for what was essentially a crime of conscience. The truth—as Mrs. Kross has often proclaimed—is that the 'Women's House' is unfit habitation for any human soul. A sweeping exploration of this case might finally hasten its end."

Many incensed New Yorkers, including Mayor John W. Lindsay, then a candidate, campaigned along with James Wechsler for a "sweeping exploration." And since public indignation by then was so extreme, another investigation, this time by the duly appointed Fourth May (1965) Grand Jury, was undertaken. It resulted—as all investigations of the House of Detention have in the past—in a virtual whitewash that came as a shock to everyone who knows the prison from its inside.

It is, of course, difficult to analyze the right or

wrong of any Grand Jury decision because of the secrecy of all that transpires inside the Grand Jury room. A rule expressed in the manual of the New York Grand Jury Association, substantially the same as the Federal rule, reads that a grand juror who "wilfully discloses any evidence adduced before the grand jury . . . is guilty of a misdemeanor."

Such secrecy, though both proper and necessary, is, however, limited to the jurors: witnesses are not bound by it. I therefore contacted and talked at length with fourteen out of the thirty-nine inmates interviewed by the Grand Jury, including Helena Lewis, Barbara Pliskow, and Benita Cannon. I spoke at length also with Carol Janeway, well-known ceramic artist and former volunteer teacher in the prison for two years, who was summarily barred from the House after she had been interviewed about conditions there by a reporter from *The Villager*.\* This embittered many of the inmates whom she had helped to rehabilitate, and who still love and believe in her. And I talked with State Assemblyman Joseph Kottler and former State Commissioner of Investigation, Herman D. Stichman, who had conducted their own infinitely more revealing investigations. Here, in capsule form, is what happened during their appearances before the Fourth May (1965) Grand Jury.

Helena Lewis told me, "The whole proceedings were fantastic as may be best exemplified by the way he, Mr. Grebow, behaved to me." She described his behavior in a signed report appearing in *The Villager* June 10, 1965. "He was hardly impartial—in fact, he did everything possible to discredit me as a witness. Most important of all, I was not

allowed to say all I wanted to say and was abruptly dismissed as I was attempting to describe the lack of rehabilitation and recreational facilities.

"When I remarked that everything possible seems to be done to humiliate the prisoners, Mr. Grebow said, 'Well, didn't you find it humiliating just to be in jail?'

"'No,' I replied, 'just the contrary since I was there out of moral conviction.'

"I described the so-called medical exam and said I had protested against this unnecessary procedure, whereupon Mr. Grebow said, 'You must admit that even though you were a civil rights demonstrator you could have been smuggling drugs into the prison.'

"I told the jury that I had medication, prescribed by the doctor, which I had to take daily. I took the pills with me to the prison and asked the prison doctor if I might be allowed to take them and was told no.

"'Why?'

"'Those are the prison rules' was the answer and that was that. This reply was always given to every question we asked.

"Mr. Grebow, at this point, said, 'Whatever made you think you could smuggle drugs into the prison?'

"I simply stared at him in astonishment and finally replied that smugglers don't usually ask the doctor if they can take a drug.

"When Mr. Grebow said something to the effect that prison is not supposed to be the Waldorf-Astoria, I remarked that innocent people are there but are subjected to the same treatment as though they were guilty.

"'Do you know of any?' asked Mr. Grebow.

"'Yes,' I replied. 'All the girls in detention are innocent until proven guilty, are they not?'

"Mr. Grebow became quite angry at this, which I think displayed his attitude quite well, i.e., what does it matter how we treat common criminals? And it wasn't long after this that I was dismissed.

"When I remarked that girls in detention were there because they couldn't raise bail he said, 'Oh, you don't like our laws, do you?'

"He did ask questions about rats and roaches in the prison but avoided asking about the food, the treatment of prisoners, and the general conditions of the prison. Some of this information I managed to blurt out and got it into the court record in spite of him, however."

Barbara Pliskow, who appeared before the Grand Jury at the same time Helena Lewis did, told me on the day after her appearance, "You know, I was terribly eager to testify but feel now, however, that I was silly to have gone before the Grand Jury because they didn't really want to hear the truth I had to tell and certainly, he, Mr. Grebow, didn't want them to hear it. What happened—well, at least three different times when I talked of things in the jail on which I could have contributed something, he shut me up by commenting on what I said in such a way as to make me seem far-out or, at best, either childish or overly academic—you know, like, 'All you, Barbara Pliskow, know about prison is what you've gotten out of books, storybooks.' And I remember, when I talked about the rampant lesbianism, he did not interrupt me so long as my report concerned the girls in the jail 'making out' with each other. But

the moment I began talking about the flirtations I'd observed the guards attempting to institute with the girls, he shut me up very effectively. He was perturbed—and it was as though every negative word I managed to get into the record was at his personal expense. As though, you know, I was insulting him personally."

I talked to Benita Cannon on the night of the day she'd gone before the Grand Jury. Since she is, herself, the daughter of a judge as well as a legal secretary, she was even more concerned than the others were with the legalities of Mr. Grebow's behavior. She said, "Mr. Grebow's actions, when he interviewed me, were completely beyond the pale. I mean—in my experience a district attorney who's really trying to disprove a client won't dare be as overtly rude or rejecting as Mr. Grebow was to me because, you know, if he would be, any judge worthy of the name would disprove his method, would interfere with his manner of questioning. But here, in the Grand Jury room, there was no one to keep Mr. Grebow under control. The Grand Jury members themselves, who, under the circumstances, were the only ones who could have controlled him as a judge in a regular courtroom might have done, were actually either highly tolerant or else approving of his manner."

Carol Janeway wrote a series of three articles for *The Villager*, entitled "A Closer Look at the Grand Jury."\* Most of the following is taken from these articles. Of her first contact with Mr. Grebow and the Grand Jury (there was a second one at her own insistence), Miss Janeway said:

"After being sworn in, I was asked to be seated.

\**The Villager*, May 20, 1965

I felt like Alice after she had drunk from the magic bottle and shrunk in size until she was only ten inches tall. My armchair, large enough for two of me, was placed dead center of a long polished table. On my left, nearly five feet away, sat a man with a stenotype. In front of me rose six or seven semicircular tiers of seats.

"After giving my name and address I was asked if I had been a volunteer teacher of ceramics at the House of Detention for Women for almost two years. Then Mr. Grebow, pointing to a folded newspaper, asked me if I had recently been interviewed by *The Villager*. 'Is it not true that as a result of this interview you have been barred from the prison? And is it not true you were barred because you violated a bylaw of the Friendly Visitors which says you must not give interviews?'

"These bylaws were and are unknown to me. I know the staff are not allowed to speak to the press without permission from Centre Street, but I was a volunteer. Commissioner Kross herself told me I was free to speak. In fact she begged me to speak."

"Miss Janeway, to get back to this interview, did you state women prisoners are not paid for their work in the House of Detention whereas male prisoners at Rikers Island are paid?"

"Yes, I did."

"But that is not the fault of the Women's House. That is the City budget," he said. "And this girl you said had asked for psychiatric help, and it was refused, whose fault was that?"

"She was interviewed by a doctor from the Department of Mental Hygiene," I answered.

"Then you can hardly blame the Women's House for that," he said triumphantly.

"Point by point he went over everything we both knew did not apply directly to the prison. And point by point, he omitted to question me about anything we both knew did apply directly. This gambit was obviously designed to lead the jury to believe I had nothing of value to contribute. And although he based all of his questions upon the May 20 interview in *The Villager*, he chose to ignore anything in the following week's 'Open Letter' in which I referred to thefts, waste, incompetence, and other abuses. Yet he had obviously read that issue also, else how did he know why and how I was barred from the prison? In short, he was hostile, and attempted to discredit me.

"The next morning I telephoned District Attorney Hogan's office. I had already spoken to Debbi, a former student of mine, and learned she had felt so humiliated she had fled the jury room in tears, unable to say what she had gone down for. I had not yet learned other witnesses, such as Helena Lewis, Benita Cannon and Barbara Pliskow, all civil rights demonstrators, as well as Assemblyman Joseph Kottler and Commissioner Herman Stichman, had met with similar hostile treatment. Since I was neither an ex-inmate, nor an investigator, nor a member of the Department, nor of the Board of Correction, I felt myself to be unbiased, credible, as well as knowledgeable.

"When I attempted to speak to Mr. Hogan, a secretary asked me what I wanted. I told her, and there was a shocked silence. 'Mr. Hogan is too busy to be disturbed. I suggest you call one of the investigators.'

"I called Thomas J. Comisky, the investigator

who had come to my apartment to interview me before I went before the Grand Jury and with whom I'd spent over an hour, and asked for the name of the man who had interrogated me the day before.

"That must have been Mr. Grebow," I was told.

"He did not give me an opportunity to speak; I was dismissed before I had a chance to say anything."

"There must be some mistake. Karl Grebow is a fine man. I've known him for many years. He is always very fair, very impartial. I suggest you call him later. He's in the jury room now. Perhaps you didn't say anything other than what was based on hearsay."

"Mr. Comisky, we discussed all of this for over an hour when you visited me last week. I was in there for only a few minutes. Besides, I am completely familiar with the rules of evidence."

"Really?" he said.

"Yes. My uncle was assistant United States Attorney General. I went to a lot of time and trouble getting all my facts together. A Grand Juror's oath requires 'he shall diligently inquire . . . nor leave anyone unpresented through fear, favor, affection or reward or hope thereof.'" I stubbornly insisted I be heard.

"Mr. Grebow telephoned me about five-thirty that same afternoon. He said he would ask Mr. Comisky to come and see me again. 'If the data you have is pertinent he will ask the Grand Jury if they wish to hear it.'

"Is that necessary?" I asked. "I would think that, as a matter of course, they would want to

hear what I have to say. Surely it is their duty to hear everything they can that is pertinent. Why take Mr. Comisky's time and mine to go over it all again?"

"I'm sorry, Miss Janeway, that's the way we must do it."

"The next morning Mr. Comisky telephoned me. He came to see me at five-fifteen that afternoon and stayed until eight-thirty—a total of three and a quarter hours.

"We went over everything again point by point, and again I felt the hopelessness of it. Point after point he demolished or dismissed, saying it was either the fault of the City, the budget, the volunteer groups, or 100 Centre Street [H.Q. for the Department of Correction]. 'We are investigating the House, nothing more.'

"But you cannot separate the prison from the City or from Centre Street. That's like a doctor probing a boil on a patient's neck without examining the patient's general health. And when you do have specific firsthand information, you reject it. I purposely said nothing to you or the jury about some of the guards acting as fences for prisoners after they are released, even going so far as to tell the girl the size and color to steal for them. I knew the inmates would never testify to this. But when I tell you of thefts I personally know about, you tell me it would be too difficult to prove, even though I know the officer's name and saw the item in question in her hand.

"I took out my old subpoena which they had not bothered to collect from me on my first visit. The last paragraph reads:

**SPECIAL NOTICE TO WITNESSES:** Complainants and witnesses should report to the District Attorney or his Assistants any attempts to intimidate them or induce them not to appear as witnesses. Frank S. Hogan, District Attorney.

"If the inmates, past and present, were not allowed to speak up to the jury, and the volunteers and members of the staff at the House obviously would not, it seemed more important than ever that I be allowed to testify. This time I would be on guard for all of the assistant D.A.'s traps and tactics. And I would not let him dismiss me until I had said everything the jury should hear.

"On Tuesday Mr. Comisky telephoned to invite me to appear again on June 15.

"When I arrived in the witnesses' waiting room I was delighted to find Commissioner Herman Stichman there. We greeted each other as old friends. Apparently we were the only ones called for this session. Last time there had been more than fifteen people waiting to be heard. I asked if this were also a repeat performance for him; he confirmed that it was, adding that he had been there before at the same time as Assemblyman Joseph Kottler, and that he also had been treated in a hostile manner by Mr. Grebow.

"After we had waited almost an hour, the Commissioner was summoned into the jury room. Half an hour later he emerged, red in the face, pulling on his hair, and blowing out his cheeks as if to let out steam. In about three minutes he was called back in.

"Finally I was called into the jury room. Mr. Grebow reminded me that I was still under oath and proceeded to question me.

"You asked to return here because you felt you did not have an opportunity to say everything you wanted to? You felt I was hostile to you? In what way was I hostile to you?" he demanded to know.

"Here we go," I thought to myself. "He's trying to sidetrack me again."

"I remembered Commissioner Stichman telling me in the witnesses' waiting room that he intended to remain in the jury room until he had had his say; he advised me to do the same.

"Just refuse to budge," he had said.

"Is there anything further you wish to say, Miss Janeway?"

"Yes, I want to tell about thefts, waste..."

"Please be more specific," he interrupted.

"I intend to be. I merely wish to indicate the areas I plan to cover. I have with me dates, names, everything." I started to open a large manila folder and drew out a large batch of papers. At this point Mr. Grebow gave up and sat down.

"My first bit of testimony concerned prices in the commissary. I told the jury that many things were higher priced in the prison than on the 'street.' Cigarettes cost 2¢ more per pack. No one expects the prison commissary to be run like an army PX with lower prices for the armed forces, but there is no reason at all to further penalize an inmate by making her pay more than she would if she were free. I, as well as many others, had discussed this with the authorities, who had merely shrugged and said: 'It only proves we have an inefficient purchasing department.'

"I told of thefts by the staff.

"I described to the jury my cleaning out the arts and crafts room before starting my ceramic classes, taking an inventory of all tools and supplies, and listing those we would need to purchase. I had been startled to discover several bags of red oxide of lead, white lead, and litharge.

"Knowing these all to be highly dangerous substances, particularly if one's health is poor, as it would be in the case of a drug addict, I put them all in one box, marked it poison, and asked that it be thrown out at once. I explained to the staff that lead can be absorbed through the pores of the skin, that one does not need to have a cut or scratch in order to be poisoned. Six months later the recreation staff made an inventory. Among the items listed was 'One box of poison.'

"I told the jury that in addition to purchasing things that were never used I saw equipment of inferior quality for which extravagant sums had been paid. Storage cabinets and lockers were installed and left unlocked because the men putting them together had set the doors in upside down. Relying on the superior knowledge of my girls when it came to anything to do with locks and doors, I appealed to Sylvia who spotted the trouble at once and rectified it.

"Equipment and supplies were purchased from one company, though I well knew and had made it clear to the House of Detention purchasing agent, that identical equipment and supplies could be obtained from another company for half the price they were paying.

"When the assistant district attorney has fin-

ished interrogating a witness, the jurors are allowed to question the witness. This was not done directly. Instead, the juror would raise his hand, Mr. Grebow would approach him, lean down, and the juror would whisper to him. Then Mr. Grebow would 'translate' the question. Sometimes a two or three-minute whispered question would be transmitted to me in one short sentence. A former inmate and one of my students in the prison told me that when she had tried to testify, Mr. Grebow had curtly said, 'There will be no questions now'—although several hands were raised.

"The first question put to me was whether I had received an answer to my letter written in December—six months ago—suggesting an investigation on kick-backs and pay-offs. I replied that I had not.

"The second and last question put to me was by one of the few women jurors. After several minutes of whispering to Mr. Grebow, he straightened up and asked: 'If you were allowed to return to teach in the House of Detention for Women, would you?'"

"'Yes,' I said. 'The girls need me.'"

Mr. Grebow and the Grand Jury, according to the two men who had important testimony against the House of Detention, Assemblyman Joseph Kottler and Commissioner Herman Stichman, were as "obnoxious" in their attitudes toward them as they were toward any of the women.

The anonymous inmates to whom I talked, those whose names can't be revealed because they are habitués, bitterly backed the conclusions of Commissioner Stichman, Assemblyman Kottler,

Barbara Pliskow, Helena Lewis, and Benita Cannon. They said that of course they didn't tell the whole truth. How could they have, in a courtroom setting and with a District Attorney rasping out questions about the jail to those who were so recently out and terrified of being put back in again. At its best, even assuming objectivity on the part of the District Attorney and the members of the jury, this kind of a formal courtroom appearance is no way to arrive at the truth. There can be no truth, after all, unless the seekers after truth not only meet their informants, but also reach them, at least once in a while, person to person. And, obviously, a courtroom is no place for a jury to reach women like the House of Detention inmates.

No wonder then that the Fourth May (1965) Grand Jury held that "the House of Detention medical examination is conducted with decorum and propriety . . . all inmates receive a most thorough physical examination . . . we have little reason to assume that medical attention was inadequate; although we do, however, find the Department of Correction remiss in failing to provide for the medical care of the inmates on a round-the-clock basis. . . ."

The Fourth May Grand Jury, before commenting on the preparation and service of food in the House of Detention, stated that it was "not unmindful of the general unpopularity of institutional food . . . we are aware that expressions of dissatisfaction with particular meals or the preparation of certain food would be unavoidable in a prison through which more than 10,000 inmates pass in the course of a year. Of course, then, there is dissatisfaction, some complaints about the food in the

House of Detention for Women. Some 10 or 15 per cent of the inmates to whom we talked complained to us. We investigated the complaints."

I waded through complaints made, not by 10 or 15 per cent, but rather 100 per cent of the inmates who talked to me. They said to me:

"It's shit! You don't know what it tasted like. In the morning—cereal, powdered milk, no sugar. You had to go to the commissary and pay your pennies if you wanted sugar. If you had money you got your sugar. That was it. You could buy other things to keep your stomach from knocking you out. Salami. Other cold cuts. Italian bread. Yeah, everything you need you can buy for money. But if you don't have money you eat the crap they cook. Well, the food there is all starch. If you want to gain weight it's a great place. . . . Mashed potatoes, diced potatoes, cut-up potatoes, sliced potatoes, a little piece of ham on Sunday. If you want anything else you got to buy it.

"Even if you only thought about eating, it's nauseating. You couldn't. Just the smell of it alone. It smells. The smell of that food is nauseating. It's just little hard lumps of potato with a thousand eyes and some kind of beef or stuff all mixed up in there. To look at it just turns anyone's stomach upside down. You just look at it and walk out. Oh yes, I have put a fork in the food and come up with a cockroach or a fly. Or another time it was steel wool. And another time it was a rubber band.

"I didn't eat the food. Everything looked gray to me. This is one of the difficulties of recalling. You see, I couldn't identify the food. We never had a glass of milk. The pregnant girls got milk but no one else did. We never had a bit of fresh fruit. . . ."

"It really was frightful. It was all starches. There was meat so seldom. I remember, the only time a piece of meat was served was for Sunday lunch which the girls fought over. They would literally fight in the dining room over this precious piece of meat. . . ."

"How are the meals? You want to find out. Well, baby, you ought to sneak up there unexpectedly and you'll find out. They're so terrible. I mean the only time they give you something decent is when they find out someone important is going to come. . . ."

"I lost eight pounds in three weeks. I couldn't sit at the table. The smell of the food made me nauseous. . . ."

"Meat—you know we hardly ever got it. But when we did, we would eat it with a spoon. Have you ever tried to cut dried-up meat with a spoon? —eat spaghetti with a spoon? . . . After these investigations, these committees came around and we started getting forks and knives even when they weren't needed. To eat something—well, like mashed potatoes, they'd give us knives anyway. You know—just because these committees had come around: Otherwise, you eat everything, everything with a spoon. . . ."

"Well, if you ever see dog food, well, you know what kind of food they have in there. . . ."

"My supper on my last night this bust was rice and there was all worms over the plate. Spanish rice—rice with like a tomato gravy, with little, tiny pieces of ground meat in it; there was worms in the rice."

But the Fourth May Grand Jury, on a tour of inspection of the House of Detention, "ate the

same dinner as was being served to the inmates and were personally satisfied with its preparation, service and wholesomeness. . . ." The Grand Jury also carefully examined the entire menu for the month of May and were "pleased," as who—reading the menu of May 6, 1965, for example—would not be?

#### MENU FOR MAY 6, 1965 (THURSDAY)

##### *Breakfast*

Applesauce—4 oz. canned  
Oatmeal—2 oz.  
Bread—4 oz.  
Margarine— $\frac{1}{4}$  oz.  
Sugar—2 oz.  
Milk—7 oz. dry whole  
Coffee— $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.

##### *Dinner*

Mutton Stew—8 oz. mutton, 8 oz. potatoes, 2 oz. carrots,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. turnips, 1 oz. tomatoes,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz., onions,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. whole dry green peas  
Corn Bread—1 oz. flour  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz. cornmeal, 2/5 oz. lard, 2/5 oz. sugar,  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. milk, dry whole, 1/10 oz. baking powder, 1/10 oz. egg, salt  
Raw Vegetable Salad,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. carrots,  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. cabbage,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. peppers, 1/20 oz. parsley,  $\frac{1}{3}$  oz. oil,  $\frac{2}{3}$  oz. vinegar.  
Bread—4 oz.  
Margarine— $\frac{1}{4}$  oz.  
Milk— $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. dry whole

Sugar— $\frac{1}{4}$  oz.  
Tea—1/10 oz.

##### *Supper*

Jambalaya—2 oz. chopped ham, 2 oz. cooked rice, 1 oz. tomato puree, 1 oz. chopped onions, 1 oz. green peppers, chopped,  $\frac{1}{8}$  oz. oil, 1/20 oz. garlic, bay leaves, water as needed.  
String beans—4 oz. canned  
Purple plums—4 oz.  
Bread—4 oz.  
Sugar— $\frac{1}{4}$  oz.  
Milk— $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. dry, whole  
Tea—1/10 oz.

Whoever composed the *Menus for May* (I can't help but wonder why the Department of Correction didn't produce the menus for January, say, or February, or any other month before the critics swooped down upon the House of Detention) has the gift of words. How different is the sound of Jambalaya cooked to gourmet's taste with oil and garlic and bay leaves "as needed" from "rice with little bugs that look like ants," or mutton stew with each inmate assured her full eight ounces of mutton plus carrots, turnips, tomatoes, onions, dry green peas plus raw vegetable salad and corn bread for calories from "just little hard lumps of potato and some kind of meat or stuff all mixed up in there."

Whose truth, whose explanations, interpretations, distortions should one accept—the inmates or the Department of Correction's? Personally,

after having myself eaten the meals ten years ago, I read the Department of Correction papers, including *Menus for May*, and I could almost hear—as though some spokesman was saying them to me, as Department of Correction spokesmen have so many times—self-justifying words about the food not having been cooked for, say, Delmonico's but it is wholesome all the same. I heard their words but wasn't moved or reached by them. And I also listened to the inmates talking about the food. Some talked self-consciously like unsure schoolgirls reciting a tentative lesson. Some threw out relentless words ("when's the last time *you* ate crap for dinner, lady?") to diminish me, to punish, because, no matter how I may deny it, I'm a representative of the Establishment to them. Their voices started loud but ran down after a while, like defective phonograph records, and there was silence between them and me. Their eyes read me like Braille—they were testing me, wondering whether I could believe in what they said about something so important to their sustenance as food. Wondering whether I could believe their passionate talk about food when I didn't need to be concerned with such matters ordinarily. They even went so far as to warn, "You won't believe this because it's too fantastic."

I did believe them, though, partly because I knew their truth from having once eaten their food myself and partly because I couldn't ignore the intensity of their feeling over the food they considered as an ultimate insult, as well as bad to eat. The inmates with their talk of the food reached me in a way the Department of Correction spokesmen never did. ". . . Jambalaya with bugs in it that

look like ants." And why, I couldn't help but wonder, did these *Menus for May* speak of sugar given free at every meal when I knew for a fact that, up until the Grand Jury probe began, inmates had to buy their sugar at the commissary? In some ways what happened at the House of Detention points up the worst of bureaucratic opportunism. You're under fire for a thing, eliminate it quietly, and act as though it's never been. You can ward off all kinds of criticism that way, and then—when the furor lets up—reinstate the thing you're under fire for.

The House of Detention, "inspected by the Grand Jury in a four-hour tour around the laundry area, the kitchen, dining rooms, infirmary, vocational education shops and cell areas was found to be neat and clean although some food particles and candy wrappers were seen on window sills at the ends of a few cell corridors. The showers in each cell were inspected as were the sinks and toilets in some individual cells. No mice or roaches were observed during the four-hour tour of inspection. . . . The conditions observed indicated a clean, sanitary and well-kept institution. . . ."

But the inmates know—better, unfortunately, than the Grand Jury does—the reason why they found the jail so clean when they visited it. Fifty-two-year-old addict-prostitute Sandra Gray, who's lived through three investigations in the Women's House, explains the exceptional cleanliness like this:

"Every time there's an investigation—like now—there's a clean-up. Like this time we were all given clean blankets and, you know, your windows had to be washed. No food in the windows. The

walls were scrubbed. Everything was repaired. Light bulbs cleaned. Soap was on the floor. Every time there was going to be an investigation, some kind of committee coming around, all these things were done. Clean spreads for everyone. Everyone had a pillow. And other times they just didn't care. You'd be surprised how just two or three broken windows can make a whole floor cold. We froze. We froze many days. I know I was sent to the hospital one day; my throat was so swollen, they thought I had mumps. They were going to quarantine the whole floor. It was only my glands had gotten infected and swollen. I had a temperature. It was from this cold on the floor. But now it's warm. Now that this committee chairman and this investigation is in the jail, the windows are fixed. The heat was on. Everything was clean and sparkling."

The bureaucratic opportunism exhibited by the authorities of the House of Detention can perhaps be best illustrated by the following incident:

In March of 1965, responding to the clamor over the overcrowding in the prison, and the existence of a snakepit dormitory on the eleventh floor, containing 58 double-decker bunks, the House of Detention moved 120 adult and 26 adolescent inmates to the Brooklyn House of Detention for Men and announced itself "done with the terrible overcrowding."

By January of 1966, however, after a special visit to the House of Detention, Edward R. Cass, Thomas G. Young, and Mrs. Marguerite N. Stumpf, of the New York State Commission of Correction, wrote, in a "Special Report," that all House of Detention inmates housed in Brooklyn in March of 1965 had been returned to New York in

December of the same year and that the eleventh-floor dormitory, among other places, had been reinstated for their accommodation. Regarding the eleventh-floor dormitory, the Commissioners stated:

"It is impossible for the undersigned to excuse, on the grounds of expediency, overcrowding or any other premise, those conditions which are found in this (the eleventh floor) area . . . the undersigned must denounce a situation that violates all rules of good security and all considerations of well-being of the inmates."

And on March 14, 1966, Assemblyman Joseph Kottler wrote a letter to Chairman of the State Commission of Correction Paul D. McGinnis regarding a recent revisit he'd made to the Women's House and he said:

"The Special Report of the State Commission of Correction dated January 27, 1966 called attention to the eleventh floor dormitory and denounced the situation as one that 'violates all rules of good security and all considerations of well-being of the inmates.' Furthermore, in a letter from the Commission of Correction to Mayor Lindsay, dated February 23, 1966, the 'thoroughly deplorable conditions' referred to in the report were brought to the attention of the Mayor of the City of New York.

"On my inspection I found that the population of the dormitory area had been reduced by eliminating the double decking of the bunks. However, in the cell blocks themselves, I found a restoration of the overcrowded conditions that brought about so much public indignation last year and which condi-

tions have been repeatedly denounced by your Commission.

"On the day that I visited the Women's House of Detention, 154 inmates were doubled up in narrow cells, causing a serious condition of overcrowding."

Assemblyman Kottler commented upon the moving and return of the inmates that "this was especially disturbing because the moving of prisoners to the Brooklyn facility had been done with a public announcement that overcrowding had been solved. However, when the inmates were returned to the Women's House of Detention, evidently sometime in December, 1965, it was done without any public announcement and in an atmosphere of secrecy which indicates a lack of candor on the part of the authorities involved."

Assemblyman Kottler, in his letter to Commissioner McGinnis, goes on to comment upon the changes, such as they are, between his first visit to the institution in December of 1964 and his last one in March of 1966, after five "thorough-going investigations including that of the Fourth May (1965) Grand Jury." He writes:

"I found certain conditions improved over last year. Generally cleanliness seemed to be improved, although this is not surprising in view of the numerous visitations which have been made. I was also happy to learn that narcotics addicts were now treated upon admission with methadone rather than the old 'drying out' method.

"In any event, the fact still remains that the Women's House of Detention is not only badly overcrowded but is the wrong prison for the purpose for which it was designed, and should be

closed as soon as possible. This demand for the closing of the prison has been a recurrent theme for many years and it has reached a point where the good faith of the officials involved has come into question."

And the Grand Jury, in agreement with Assemblyman Kottler, not alone condemned the physical plant of the present Women's House of Detention but urged that a new House of Detention on Rikers Island—plans have been drawn up and repeatedly mentioned since 1957 when it was first contemplated—"be constructed *immediately* . . . eliminating all the technical delays which, too often, are built-in characteristics of public projects."

The contemplated new prison features outdoor athletic fields and an indoor gymnasium, a spacious auditorium (little theater) and workrooms and workshops with modern equipment.

But how much can a new jail plant, no matter how physically excellent, really and truly aid in the rehabilitation of such women as Joan, Joyce, Bertha, Cora May, Cindy, and Molly McGuire, the vast mass of repeater inmates? My experiences there, enforced by consultation with psychiatrists and social workers, both in and out of the House of Detention, including Beatrice Weissberg, admired Director of the House of Detention Department of Social Service when I was there in 1957, reveal a bitter truth—a reality that every decent impulse in us is bound to revolt against. The truth is that a majority of the repeater inmates, like Joan, Joyce, Bertha, Cora May, Cindy, and Molly, while certainly neither hardened nor psychopathic criminals like Rusty Bricker, or Lucky Lopez, are, nevertheless, by the time they reach the prison, so sickened

and degenerated by their lives that they are beyond help, beyond salvation. How could they not be since their degradation, far from being a new thing, has been instead the pattern of their lives from the day they were born? The "cards were always stacked" against them, as those I interviewed for this book, profound fatalists all, told me over and over again. And the cards are still so stacked that the miserable patterns of their lives can be neither broken nor hindered by a governmental establishment, not even an excellently equipped hospital, and certainly not a jail like the House of Detention, no matter how enlightened it may become in the future.

Which is certainly not to say that the snakepit conditions of the present House of Detention for Women should or can be tolerated. It is a heinous, evil place "whose walls should be broken down in the name of humanity" as the Committee of Outraged Parents passionately proclaimed. And also, in the name of humanity, the Rikers Island jail the city has promised to build in its place should be, as it is planned, a cottage-type minimum-security institution with rooms offering privacy, and perhaps a sense of personal dignity not generally available to the inmates in their home environments, instead of cells.

It should, as it is planned, have ample grounds where women who have no touch with the earth otherwise can live among growing things. It should, as it is planned, have indoor and outdoor exercise facilities for reviving sick and tired bodies. And it should have the best available educational and vocational facilities. It should, of course, be staffed by the most able and dedicated officers, doctors,

psychiatrists, teachers, and social workers that a careful personnel policy and money can buy.

Certainly, also, the House of Detention, with its many personally maladjusted women, some still young, who are not criminals, should institute the program whereby inmates' rehabilitation is aided by utilizing community facilities. Those who may, by even the wildest stretch of the imagination, benefit by attending school in the outside community rather than in jail, or by working on outside jobs and learning in outside schools or recreation centers, should be offered educational and work-release permits during weekdays and only be forced to spend their nights and weekends in the jail.

"School and work-release programs," according to Milton Rector, Director of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and perhaps one of the most penetrating and well-advised men working in the field of penology today, "are exciting in their essence and have proven themselves highly effective in those places which have tried them."

After work and education release programs have been instituted for those who can make use of them, however, and after the new jail has been built and staffed, there is still this brutal fact to face: Many inmates—ineligible for a host of reasons for work and educational release—will, even though incarcerated in a new, modern prison, go on maintaining the same vicious cycle in which they lived while they were in the present House—drinking, taking narcotics, prostituting, being arrested and sent to jail, serving out their time and being released, returning to their same sordid lives and being arrested again. And again and again.

But once we recognize fully the hopelessness of

ordinary rehabilitation methods for a great number of present inmates and render ourselves tough to that sad fact, we can be cheered by a realization that could never occur so long as we kept hoping for impossible cures. The House of Detention for Women, because of the fact that many of its inmates *are* beyond healing, can be transformed from the giant poor farm it is today into a crucible of social significance, an experimental laboratory with a potential for profiting other sick and twisted people.

Specifically, since there are so many narcotics addicts in the House of Detention who couldn't be further injured by any new event that might occur in their lives, arrested addicts, instead of being confined to the House of Detention as they are now, should be placed and carefully supervised in the outside community as subjects for research projects to discover ways and means by which admittedly irreformable addicts can exist outside of institutions.

I emphasize *outside* of institutions because, as we should know by now, all the experiments ever conducted with the hope of rehabilitating addicts through long-term institutionalization have failed. They have all been, as in the Rockefeller program (suggested by New York Governor Rockefeller, and approved by the State Legislature, which would force addicts to be incarcerated in hospitals for a period of up to three years) today, both expensive to maintain and odious to people who believe in civil liberties and don't wish to concede the state the right to force addicts to receive long-term treatment, whether in hospitals or prisons. Besides, assuming long-term treatment for addiction could

be made both practicable and palatable (and that's assuming a lot), we have still got to reckon with the fact that a treatment period, no matter how long-term, must eventually come to an end, and the addict be returned to the community. All investigations so far conducted prove beyond a doubt that, even where institutional treatment has been somewhat successful, few addicts have been able to sustain on the outside whatever gains they make in hospitals or jails.

It is time, therefore, to take the ultimate step we've been resisting so long and to find ways, with the aid of experimentees or—to put the facts with brutal honesty—guinea pigs like House of Detention inmates, to help addicts live in the community, not without drugs because the hopeless ones can't, but with the crutches they need and we can provide. The crutches may be their supervised use of methadone or cylazocine or some other known drug substitute or perhaps some still unknown one. It would seem to make sense to try out on these women, whose present lives are intolerable anyhow, substances for controlling addiction sufficiently to help its victims function in a community outside the prison and the hospitals which, for all they've done for addicts to date, might as well be prisons.

If the House of Detention, in its overwhelmingly large addiction area, were, in reality, to turn itself into a laboratory, it would provide a new hospital facility where arrested repeater addicts would be detained only until they're physically withdrawn. Then, as soon as withdrawal was accomplished, they'd be returned to their own or another community, remaining under intimate supervision of House of Detention social workers, who would aid

the doctors in administering their drug substitutes. The team of doctor-social worker associated with the House of Detention would serve the double-faceted function of keeping individual women under legal surveillance and of helping them adjust, to the best of what we must recognize to be their meager abilities, to life uninterrupted by periodic prison terms. Finally, the doctor-social worker teams would report their observations to qualified researchers in addiction.

Milton Rector, commenting in the summer of 1965, said, "Far from being a radical or far-out idea, this laboratory for addicts suggests itself to me as a natural follow-up to the effective work and education release program because this is, after all, a health release in a very real sense."

Any consideration of programs for combatting addiction must, of course, bring us to the Rockefeller Plan for Combatting Addiction in New York State. Its passage shocked me and many other people acquainted with the thousands of Joyce Kranjewskis who pass through the revolving doors of the House of Detention for Women. I believe that neither Governor Rockefeller nor the Joint Legislative Committee on Penal Institutions ever came to really know the inmates and the most elementary truths of their inner lives. If they did know them, they'd have to know also that the inmates' tragedy and society's is this—that, no matter what we do for them now, we can't hope to make up to them for all they didn't have in their pasts. It is too late to think we can. And it is certainly too late to think we can change them from what they are into what we would wish them to be. They are beyond any of our sovereign remedies. Even if you could

offer the women out of the House of Detention private analysis every day of the three years Governor Rockefeller proposes to keep them locked up (certainly in hospitals instead of jails, but locked up nevertheless, since they'll be there involuntarily), you still wouldn't change their basic psyches enough so they'd be able to carry on in the world without the kind of help methadone may be.

Another skeleton in the House of Detention prison closet that should be pondered and examined with laboratory seriousness, rather than merely locked away, is the vagrant inmate of the Skid Row type. There aren't many women like Molly McGuire, on the Bowery, of course, but those who are there end up, sooner or later, in the House of Detention for Women. And they are, far and away, the most alien to the rest of us of all the inmates. Whether they're in jail or out, we can't imagine or even guess at the lives they lead, and so, certainly, we can have no inkling of their fantasies or inner lives which led them on to Skid Row in the first place. And we ought to know about them because there is a chance that, if we understand their lacks that make them unable to survive in the normal world, we can give some aid to survival, if not to them who may already be too cowed and beaten, then to others of their type who haven't yet reached the point of no return.

From my long contact with Skid Row vagrant repeater inmates I've come to believe that the House of Detention can serve, as it can with addicted women, as a laboratory which may help us to understand their problems as we don't begin to now. And just as hopeless addicts will be eager subjects for experiments undertaken beyond the

walls of the jail, so the Skid Row derelict women will be willing subjects for investigations that should, perhaps, be undertaken behind the prison walls. For they are the only volitional prisoners (with rare exceptions among individuals here and there) in the jail. Not only don't they object to being arrested but, they actually invite police attention.

There are many perplexing questions regarding Skid Row men as well as women that a House of Detention laboratory might be able to answer someday. Such answers might conceivably lead to new psychiatric, religious, educational, and social service programs not alone for derelicts, but also for young people whom agencies might be enabled to identify as potential derelicts. This may be a greater number than most of us suspect.

I believe that the questions that confuse ministers, teachers, and social workers dedicated to relieving derelicts and guiding potential derelicts (the questions with which they'd most like us to begin our researches) include:

1. Are Skid Rowers on Skid Row because they drink or do they drink because they are on Skid Row?

I believe, not alone from my present research but also from that I conducted in 1956, that Molly and others drink because they are on the Bowery and not that they are on the Bowery because they drink. The House of Detention, as much as any single agency dealing with Skid Row women today, can help us find out the truth of this thesis.

2. Should there be an institution where vagrants, and particularly vagrant women who are miserable in the community and can't hope to maintain themselves there, can be cared for on a long-term basis?

It may be that vagrant women need halfway houses, way stations between institutions for their confinement and free living in the community, more than any other people, including addicts, who are always touted as the most logical candidates. Perhaps they, rather than ordinary addicts, would benefit by the type of rehabilitation Governor Rockefeller is forcing upon the dissenting addicts. Many of them, unlike addicts, would enter centers of their own will and even, more than likely, with a feeling of gratitude.

3. What is the extent of man's inhumanity to derelicts?

The inmate vagrants, in their contact with our Establishments—hospitals, welfare agencies, etc., in addition to jails like the House of Detention—can doubtless give us an insight into them most of the rest of us couldn't possibly possess.

The House of Detention is overpopulated not alone by prostitutes, addicts, and vagrant alcoholics but also by a vastly disproportionate number of Black and Puerto Rican prostitutes, addicts, and alcoholics. It is appropriate, therefore, if the prison is to serve as a laboratory, for particular attention to be given to Black and Puerto Rican inmates. Of course, the special factors propelling them downwards into such institutions are generally being

given adequate attention by other qualified research agencies. The House of Detention might offer itself as a center to such agencies.

More immediately and specifically, however, it could render the unique service of becoming a center for investigating, straight from the mouths of the ones who know best, the manner in which the law actually operates with minority offenders. The inmates, if they care to, could doubtless inform us of instances of police brutality we'd otherwise find it difficult to uncover. They know the city's policemen from their three vantage points of being a minority person, female and defenseless female at that, and addict-prostitute who may, by her existence, offend the sense of morality of some officers. Their experiences, therefore, do not altogether approximate those of other Blacks and Puerto Ricans who report cases of overt brutality either to the Police Review Board or agencies like the Civil Liberties Union. I believe their experiences with police officers, while they are generally less dramatic than those we ordinarily hear of, are multidimensional. The Black and Puerto Rican inmates, while they're seldom exposed to the overt brutality men often experience, are very often faced with the covert brutality of special police callousness and impatience and remoteness and condescension. They aren't so much exposed to overt brutality as they are to officers who, while they only sometimes descend to framing them, very often act on their moral certainty of their guilt and do not hesitate to invent evidence on which they would have to be convicted. They often meet policemen who behave as judges and juries as well as

arresting officers and find them guilty not so much for the specific offenses with which they are charged as for the fact that they're prostitutes or addicts and Blacks or Puerto Ricans. Their reports could doubtless give us a picture of the city's policemen vs. minority lawbreakers that we couldn't achieve through any other source. But they will be hard to come by because these aren't the kinds of women either to volunteer their stories or to believe we have enough good faith toward them to give credence to what they say. And they certainly don't believe, no matter how truly scandalizing their commentaries may be, that we will act to alleviate their situations. As long-term Black addict and prostitute, Rosa Mae Jones, says:

"What difference if I tell them how the police beat me up? I mean, what am I supposed to do, go down to City Hall and cry on the Mayor's shoulders? Will that stop the police from beating me up? Listen, it don't do you no good to cry about nothing in this city.

"Like I mean, the last time I come out of jail, I had nothing. And I tried to get relief and couldn't, so I began whoring again. So I got arrested and here I am back in the House of D. Well, I am an addict and I took convulsions in the street after I got out of the House of D. So a cop picked me up and I said, 'I am sick, so will you please take me to the hospital?' And he said, 'You belong in jail, not in the hospital, black junkie bitch.' But then, after a long time, he did take me to the hospital, though he said, 'They won't let a junkie like you through the door.' And they didn't. And so here I am again in the House of D. So I know I'm

going to be back here, no matter what. So why should I talk about if the cops beat me or hit me while they're bringing me into jail? It's all the same if they do or they don't. Everything's the same because I'm always back in the House of D."

Rosa Mae Jones, when one probes the reasons behind her bitter talk regarding the relief she couldn't get although she desperately needed it, and the hospital which didn't admit her so she had to be taken to the House of Detention, is saying rather more than she perceives. What she is saying, in effect, is what National Council on Crime and Delinquency Director, Milton Rector, also says. Milton Rector says that the House of Detention is not the only New York City institution to blame for Rosa's and the other inmates' misfortune. The welfare officer that denied her help when she desperately needed it should also be censured, as should the hospital that denied her admission although she was ill. Recognizing the validity of her recriminations, and carrying them to their ultimate, we must indict not only the City Department of Correction through the House of Detention for having victimized Rosa Mae and the other inmates, but also other city departments, including Health, Hospitals, and Welfare. The House of Detention for Women, as the life stories of Joyce Kranjewski, Bertha, Cora May, and Cindy Green, and Molly McGuire prove, will not be changed from the hellhole it is today—no matter where or how elegantly it is eventually housed—until the City Departments of Health, Welfare, and Hospitals take upon their shoulders the responsibilities they've been sloughing off—until the great city of

New York, instead of resting content when its poor people are out of sight in jail mobilizes all its resources to attack the terrible poverty in its midst.

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